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ABSTRACT

When the Winnetka public school system reexamined its philosophy, questions were raised about the alignment between theory and practice. This sourcebook represents the thinking of teachers about how the validity of their philosophy of education rests on their ability to analyze what they are, discover how they came to be what they are, and imagine what they will become. Seven chapters include: (1) "Promises We Can Keep" (Sandra Karaganis); (2) "The Process of Reflection at the District Level" (Mary Ann Manley); (3) "In the Eyes of One Parent" (Kelley Fead); (4) "The Roots of Tradition: A Washburne Legacy" (William G. Meuer); (5) "Voices of the Teachers" (Idyth Zimbler); (6) "Educating for Democracy" (Daniel Schwartz), "Education in the Fine Arts" (Sanae Willoughby), "A New Beginning and a Happy Ending" (Ernie Love), "Everything Matters" (Merle Scharmann), "Technology Challenge" (Robert Golden), "Answers from the Rain Forest" (Marjorie Steiner), "An Essay on Integrated Curriculum" (Andrea Saiet), "Pioneers of Our Learning: Nineteen Years of the Winnetka Teachers Institute" (Winnetka Teachers); and (7) "Transformations and Unanswered Questions: A Framework for Direction" (Rebecca van der Bogert). Appendix A describes Winnetka as a learning community, and Appendix B contains a Winnetka School District survey questionnaire. (RT)

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The Search for Common Values at Winnetka: One District Challenges Its Traditions, Practices, and Philosophical Assumptions. New Directions for School Leadership The Jossey-Bass Education Series

Sandra Karaganis, Editor

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The Search for Common Values at Winnetka

One District Challenges Its Traditions, Practices, and Philosophical Assumptions

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Sponsored by the International Network of Principals' Centers

SANDRA KARAGANIS

EDITOR

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NEW DIRECTIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP | NO. 8, SUMMER 1998

The Search for Common Values at Winnetka

One District Challenges Its Traditions, Practices, and Philosophical Assumptions

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THE SEARCH FOR COMMON VALUES AT WINNETKA: ONE DISTRICT CHALLENGES ITS TRADITIONS, PRACTICES, AND PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS
Sandra Karaganis (ed.)
New Directions for School Leadership, No. 8, Summer 1998
Rebecca van der Bogert, Editor-in-Chief

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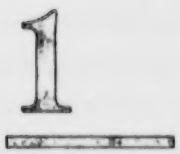
A living philosophy is always in a continuous process of reinterpretation and reappropriation. Such a process assumes that the traditional roots of that philosophy have enough authority that the search for its present meaning can be publicly pursued as a common project. The public and common pursuit of the philosophy of the Winnetka Public Schools district is the topic of this chapter.



Promises we can keep

Sandra Karaganis

THIS COLLECTION OF WRITING is submitted by a group of people who have dedicated their careers to the understanding and practice of education. First and foremost, they are teachers. In this collection, the writers address the traditions, transitions, and transformations that occur in a district when teachers focus their energies on defining what they believe and how those beliefs are aligned with their classroom practice. As the Winnetka Public School system turns its attention to rewriting the philosophical document *Winnetka: A Community of Learners*, each teacher's time and thoughts contribute to this undertaking.

I began my teaching career in the 1960s, a time of great turmoil, experimentation, and excitement. Schools were trying out alternative ways of educating young people, worrying about the space race and busing students. Equity was a familiar cry. Special education was in its heyday as a separate system. There was the desire for relevance in all things. It was an extraordinary time at all levels of education.

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As I reflect on the many changes that were taking place, I am grateful for having been educated by people who made clear the importance and relevance of my chosen profession.

I have spent the past twenty years in the Winnetka Public Schools, beginning as a teacher in a special education classroom and currently serving as an elementary school principal. It has been a bit like a long, solid marriage, punctuated by challenging and sometimes disturbing episodes, as well as richly fulfilling ones. During this period, progressivism, as defined by John Dewey, Carleton Washburne, and Francis Parker, characterized us in the public as well as private eye. In 1985, the faculty and administration determined that we needed to create a document that would capture not only our history but also the spirit and the actuality of our efforts as educators. Although regular and systematic consideration was given to the curriculum and pedagogy, a comprehensive and districtwide review had not taken place. By writing a philosophical document, we hoped to shed light on the social and personal processes that had influenced our practice. As a faculty, we reflected on and discussed theoretical and philosophical issues while attempting to ground ourselves in practical concerns. Our goal was to develop a larger and more inclusive vision of what it meant to be an educated person. *Winnetka: A Community of Learners* was the result of these efforts (see Appendix A).

The 1985 document dedicated itself to an "uncompromising commitment . . . to a consideration of the child as a whole person and to the maximum development of the essential skills." This commitment has not changed. In 1985, a group of faculty and community members joined forces and studied the changes that had occurred in childhood, considered new research on how children learn, and explored questions about the future. As a result of these joint efforts, eleven areas were designated as requiring increased focus and attention in order to have a positive effect on the social, emotional, and intellectual growth of children in our district. These subject areas became the guiding principles of our philosophical document and the backbone of subsequent curricular revisions. They are as follows:

Childhood protected
Global understanding
Community-school partnership
Consistent relationships
Parent-school cooperation
Student and teacher planning
Understanding learning and thinking
Integrated learning
Developmental learning
Understanding of technology
Physical and emotional well-being

Today, we struggle with the same question posed in 1985: are our programs, methods, and values suited to current conditions and future requirements? By understanding the history of the Winnetka Public Schools and the roots of our philosophy, we are able to reexamine and challenge our own dogma. Our current task is to look again at the document written in 1985 and to develop for our schools a community vision that can be turned into reality. And so we have asked ourselves, does our original document continue truly to reflect what we believe and what we do?

Our original document remains strong, but in the intervening years, we have experienced many changes, both as a school district and as a community. Patterns and continuity are often discernible only in retrospect. We have found that our suburban community is no longer immune to forces that are affecting many other larger or more urban communities. Dual-career families, difficulties with child care, unemployed parents, economic concerns, and uncertainty about the future all find expression in skepticism directed toward the institutions that serve the community. Many topics previously thought to be within the purview of professional decision making have found their way into public discourse and tend, at times, to override dialogue about the more fundamental issues of value.

The explosion of information that has occurred since 1985 changes the emphasis of the original document if not its intent.

Who in 1985 could have anticipated the unprecedented research into how learning occurs? Brain research has opened new areas for studying the application of teaching methods and has allowed for more authentic forms of assessment. The arts, too, have become an increasingly legitimate form of intellectual expression and have enriched our understanding of what constitutes intelligence. Technological advances have provided our students with a world made accessible through the immediate availability of up-to-the-minute information.

Who in 1985 could have anticipated the changes in the roles of parents and schools? Voices in the community exert a tremendous influence over what we do and how we do it. Opinions of what constitutes schooling are diverse and strongly stated. Standardized test scores sell newspapers by pitting community against community and school against school in the relentless march toward some mythical sense of well-being and accomplishment. However, most troubling is the change in childhood itself. Our overriding concern is the protection of our children from the overstimulation of images and experiences that do not promote the kind of learning that is necessary for healthy growth and development.

The many changes that have occurred bring us to a reexamination of our past and an examination of our future. In this volume, we attempt to trace through our history and our current practice the development of the ideas, experiences, and symbols that have formed our thinking. Our conceptual framework as a progressive district, in many respects, determines the outcome. Such a framework is never free of value judgments. As we analyze how we live now with words and images often reflecting our nostalgia, we are able to see what in our thinking and practice has become merely habit. Terms such as *progressive*, *developmental*, *child-centered*, and *traditional* all imply singular definitions and risk becoming mere sound bites in our school culture. We need to look closely at these terms and raise the questions necessary to keep them relevant.

Maintaining a historical perspective helps us keep sight of the relationship of teaching to its larger social context. We are revisiting our philosophy, not with the expectation that it will expose

major changes or new directions for practice, but rather that it will allow a closer alignment to the principles of child development on the one hand and current educational practices on the other.

The process of reviewing our philosophy challenges us to put our views on education into practice without sacrificing the outcomes of education that our community as a whole expects. We need to establish a harmony of purpose consistent with our past as well as with new imperatives and understandings. It is necessary to establish a common language with each other and with our community. To proceed, it is essential that we agree to certain standards that are not subject to constant renegotiation. The standards we live by must also express our traditions and principles.

The question remains, for both the community and the school, what promises can we make to our students that we can keep? The commitments of the community and the schoolhouse are not antithetical; they are deeply intertwined. When the community and the schoolhouse work together, each nurtures the role of the other.

Our schools are reflective environments. We are expected to think carefully about what we are doing; we are given time to plan our steps with caution and care, time to proceed deliberately, and time to consider the outcomes of our actions. Teachers are often called on to explain and sometimes even justify particular stances or actions. The need to defend a position with material evidence and keen observation has created teachers who search for patterns and similarities and who view outcomes as resulting from a variety of interacting forces, not single causally related factors. In this reflective environment, the focus is not only on the child as active learner but on the teacher as well.

As a result of our reexamination of *Winnetka: A Community of Learners*, we were "walking our talk," which permitted our teachers to view their practice as dynamic and subject to change over time. The expectation is that not only the form of teaching, but the meaning, too, will be altered. During staff discussions and planning sessions around the document, the faculty spent an appreciable amount of time talking individually and collectively about what they are doing. Autonomy and individual style were valued and

demonstrated, but by working along common lines and with a common spirit, we were able to pursue common purposes.

It is within this reflective environment that taking the risk of reexamining the document was encouraged. Our successes were celebrated. Our knowledge of the possibility of public failure was openly acknowledged. Within this environment, teachers have submitted, in writing, their views of our district's traditions, transitions, and transformations that have influenced, inspired, and raised questions about our common values. Within this context is the understanding that the educational process in Winnetka, as in other districts, is unique and that it survives and thrives because it is firmly child-centered.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four describe the process of revisiting the original 1985 *Winnetka: A Community of Learners* document. All three chapters discuss the participation and organization of all concerned individuals—community members, faculty, and parents—and the efforts that are required when all voices are heard and valued. This task demanded cooperation among people passionately involved in teaching and raising children. It demanded a commitment to understanding each other and to supporting our growth and development as teachers and parents. It demanded that the relationships that exist between people and ideas be reexamined so that the qualities of commitment and communication were well understood as the cornerstones of a solid partnership. Finally, these three chapters demonstrate how understanding and communication can transform commitment into action.

Chapter Five describes the history and traditions that ground us. It describes the commitments that endure from generation to generation between teachers, students, and community. The ethical values and human components that surface in a historical context continue to enable us to search for professional meaning not only in our history but in our current environment as well.

In Chapter Six, teachers explore the influences, inspirations, and inquiries that exert themselves when deliberate self-appraisal is the goal. The transitions that occur in the midst of uncertainty and change are full of surprises. As teachers begin to view ambiguity

and uncertainty not as problems to be remedied but as opportunities for deep learning, their understanding of themselves and of their profession is no longer viewed as absolute but rather as ambiguous and contingent. As the writers thoughtfully explore a variety of topics, their thinking permits us to view the values already embedded in our current philosophy and practice and look for ways in which they can find fuller expression in the new document.

The final chapter deals with transformations that occur when questions create a framework for new direction and the roles of mentor and apprentice shift as the process of learning and growing unfolds. When weaknesses and vulnerabilities as well as gifts and strengths are placed on the same path toward understanding and transformation, we can look beyond the habitual and comfortable to see the possibilities and beliefs that are inherent in our experience. This final chapter provides us with the spirit and direction to proceed optimistically, learning through our critical reflection, toward the education of our children.

As Dewey (1966) reminds us, a school culture is democratically created through experiences, inquiry, and education. Democracy presupposes a trust in the common person's capacity to respond with common sense and a working faith in the unlimited possibilities of human nature. Enduring educational theories are fundamental enough to incorporate current realities. Our philosophy must be founded on experience—not just personal, individual experience but that of our predecessors. A historical perspective enables us to form our theories intelligently and defend our positions candidly. Our perspectives must be reasoned out, not simply asserted. As we speak forthrightly for what we value, we demonstrate the kind of respectful free speech that a democracy demands. Only then will we be able to acknowledge that our theories are theories, not immutable truths, and that slavish adherence to theory might inhibit our ability to clearly see the child and his or her world.

Changes in politics, the economy, and family structure all alter educational conditions and expectations. To function well, an educational system must be responsive to the surrounding social conditions. But as Vito Perrone (1991) suggests, we must develop

purposes and expectations that not only reflect the human condition but also extend beyond it. We accomplish this by keeping large hopes before us and making use of language and ideas that inspire us beyond our current practice.

Mary Catherine Bateson, in her book *Composing a Life* (1990), reminds us that constancy is an illusion. If we can remain sensitive to context, to interaction, and to the importance of continuity, we will recombine familiar material in new ways. We need to redefine our commitments. She reminds us that we needn't seek fixed knowledge of what is good; we need to sustain a kind of attention that is open, not focused on a single point.

Effective educational practice is grounded in both theory and real activity. Thus our philosophy can be tested only in action. As we undertake this journey of redefinition, our philosophy's validity will rest on our ability to analyze what we are, discover how we came to be what we are, and imagine what we will become. Our philosophy will acknowledge that our common values can be both theoretical and pragmatic.

John Dewey (1966) speaks of projects that we create that are never finished; of the self in the making, not knowing where it will end; of the sense of possibility; of the sense of wondering. Being in love with the unpredictable loosens the ties to pedagogy. As in a long-term marriage, we will never know how the journey ends and which promises we can keep unless we begin. As you proceed through this volume, know that we have indeed begun and are in the process of reaffirming our traditions, acknowledging our transitions, and evolving through to transformations in our practice.

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True reflection must be done within a democratic context and must honor the inclusion of all voices. Framing the process to include forums for conversation and input from staff, parents, community members at large, and school board members is a challenge that is essential. This chapter is a description of the steps we took to provide forums for the revisiting of our philosophy.

2

The process of reflection at the district level

Mary Ann Manley

> Any organization that is dedicated to maintaining its vitality must periodically undergo a fundamental reevaluation of its mission and its programs.
>
> —From the Preface, *Winnetka: A Community of Learners*, June 1985

IT WAS IN THIS CONTEXT that the Winnetka Public Schools began a comprehensive examination of their mission and program during the 1983–84 school year. That review was conducted with the involvement of the staff, parents, and community at large. After countless hours of study over a three-year period, the document *Winnetka: A Community of Learners* (WACOL) was written. Following that, the staff was then involved in ongoing study that resulted in the revision of each of the district curriculum guides, with the last one being completed in 1990.

Since that time, WACOL has served as the district philosophy that has guided curriculum work, staff development, and communication with parents and community regarding the community's

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values for its children. The document and the philosophy have served us well and have continued, over time, to receive the endorsement of the Winnetka staff as a well-developed framework for our work.

Given the dramatic changes in our world, our community, and our staff since 1986, it seemed timely that we should once again formally seek the input of the community about what it values for our students. With this information in hand, the staff began to revisit their basic philosophy and guiding principles to reaffirm, clarify, and adjust as necessary. Once again, this process is not being accomplished quickly but rather illustrates the reality that striving for excellence is an ever-evolving process.

Phase I: Identification of the need for input

During the 1993–94 school year, a quality review steering committee was convened for the Winnetka Public Schools. The purpose of this districtwide committee was to design the general framework of the school improvement plans that would be used across the district to meet state requirements for reporting school goals and progress to the community. As part of the committee's task, a demographics section was written, including descriptions of the student population and the needs of our Winnetka students.

This committee was composed of teachers, administrators, and parents from across the district. Details for the demographics section were based on input from this group, the philosophy and guiding principles contained in *Winnetka: A Community of Learners*, and information that had been gleaned by a search firm that had conducted a number of focus groups to identify the unique needs of our students and the characteristics of our community as part of the process of hiring four new administrators for the district.

During the 1994–95 school year, the quality review steering committee developed the formal process to be followed for the ongoing review and revision of district goals, learning outcomes, and local assessments. At the final committee meeting, it was recommended

that the district conduct a formal and systematic survey of the community to determine whether the "Perceived Student Needs" section of the WACOL document reflected the current community.

In the fall of the 1995–96 school year, the members of the board of education and the district's administrative team participated in a workshop to identify initiatives for the 1995–1997 school years. The first of four initiatives stated, "The district philosophy as presently reflected in *Winnetka: A Community of Learners* should be understood, modified if necessary, and reaffirmed." With the endorsement of the district quality review steering committee, the individual school improvement teams, and the document detailing district initiatives as articulated during the board of education–administrative team workshop, it was clear that the systematic and formal process of soliciting community input was a high priority.

While developing school improvement plans as a result of state mandates, the Winnetka Public Schools also continued implementing many of the changes that came about as a result of the in-depth curriculum study begun in 1983 to pursue the best for students. Staff continued to be guided by the belief of longtime Winnetka superintendent of schools Carleton W. Washburne that "a philosophy of education, evolved by those who are living among children, helping them and being taught and guided by them, is itself living and like all living things is ever changing." As change took place, it was balanced by the continuity of Washburne's belief. Throughout the renewal process, the staff and community recommended changes but also reaffirmed continuing commitments that have always been part of our philosophy and have served us well.

As mentioned earlier, many changes had taken place in the Winnetka Public Schools over the years. Our community was becoming increasingly mobile, resulting in more frequent turnover of student and parent populations. At the same time, enrollment was increasing, exacerbating the need for space in each of our buildings. In addition, there had been a drastic change in our staff, with a number of our senior members taking advantage of an early retirement program. Consequently, it was an appropriate time to

take a new look at what we believed to be good for children and what the community valued.

Phase II: The survey

Once the need for a survey was identified, time was spent investigating ways to proceed. A grant written and received in the winter of 1996 allowed us to move forward.

Panel

In February 1996, information was sent to community and staff regarding formation of a WACOL panel to help develop a community survey. From March through October 1996, the panel determined timing and scope of the survey, identified key areas to include in the survey (panel members were joined by additional community and staff members as part of this process), heard reports of the researcher's findings, offered observations on data in a panel reflection paper, and kept the community informed of the process through newsletters, reminder cards, and local newspaper articles.

The broad-based panel was designed to be representative of the community. It included long-term residents and new residents; parents of preschool, elementary, middle, and high school students; retired residents with children no longer in the schools; business representatives; and parents of children with special needs, mainstream children, and exceptional children. The staff were also representative of these various categories.

Survey development

A market research consultant was hired to lead and execute the survey development and research process. As a critical first step, four- to six-member study groups were formed among the panelists, additional community members, and staff to identify potential issues for the survey. Under the consultant's direction, each study group completed individual written exercises and held two three-hour group discussions regarding assigned topic areas. Topic areas

included the philosophy and guiding principles contained in the WACOL document, alternative viewpoints on what students should know and be able to do, alternative approaches to teaching and learning, and changes in the world that might affect approaches to education.

Objectives of the individual exercises and group discussions were to generate a list of key questions and issues on which it would be important or useful to obtain community input and also to distill the key meaning and implications of the current philosophies and guiding principles so that their relevance, value, and importance to the community could be reassessed. The extensive in-depth output from these exercises was compiled and synthesized into a comprehensive list of issues and question areas. Next, each panelist provided a personal perspective on the relative priority of the various issues and question areas. A final list of priorities, identified by the entire panel, then served as the basis for questionnaire development.

Once developed, the questionnaire was pretested among a small sample of Winnetka residents and research firm employees. Results from the pretest were used to fine-tune the questionnaire for clarity and to reduce its length. (The final version of the questionnaire appears in Appendix B.)

Community input

While the survey was being prepared for distribution, the panel turned its attention to decisions regarding audience and timing. Having reviewed the pros and cons of both random and census survey approaches, the panel chose to send the survey to everyone in the community. The primary goals were to give every person a chance to have input into the process and to be as inclusive as possible. The decision was made to move the process along quickly and get the survey out before the end of the school year. This would also give the researcher time to analyze the data over the summer so that the panel could return in the fall and begin the process of making sense of the findings. Notices were placed in the local paper and school newsletters alerting the public that the

survey was coming. After it was mailed, reminder cards were sent out encouraging people to respond.

By the end of the school year, surveys had been returned, and the researcher began her work of combing through the results and organizing the information. The panel met immediately at the beginning of the following school year to review the results. In the "Researcher's Perspective," results were reported and implications were spelled out. The panel then discussed the findings, and members gave their thoughts on what they found to be the major implications. This input was then analyzed along with the researcher's, and the "Collective Perspective" section, highlighting what the total group considered the major findings, was written.

Staff input

The same survey conducted with the community was given to the staff. Some sections of the survey were specific to parents; these were not appropriate for the staff to answer. The results for the sections of the survey answered by staff were analyzed by the researcher and shared with the panel so as once again to get the panel's thoughts and to arrive at a collective perspective.

At this point, the actual survey process came to an end. Throughout the nine months that it took to form the panel, write and conduct the survey, and prepare a report, the greatest value was the interaction of community, parents, and staff members as all struggled to identify how to get input from the community and how to make sense of the input once it was received. Many individuals throughout the community seemed to be focused on this process.

Phase III: Using the information

Once information has been compiled, one has a responsibility to do something with it. How to go about sharing a volume over two hundred pages in length and the results of hours of group discussion to arrive at a common perspective was the next challenge. The

natural first steps were meetings with the staff and the community to give an overview of the findings. A summary was also sent out in the district newsletter. Then it was time for the next level of work to begin.

The survey has provided the district with a vast quantity of data to review and consider as it plans for the future. Areas of common endorsement should be embraced and should continue to provide the philosophical bases for the district. At the same time, district committees should look closely at areas identified in the data as needing clarification or study. To carry on the work, a WACOL task force of district staff was formed. The charge of this group has been to identify umbrella themes emerging from the study in order to design staff development activities that would result in further study of these topics. This input will then be considered as the task force gathers in the summer of 1998 to revise *Winnetka: A Community of Learners* based on all that has been learned over the past two years.

Reflections on the process

And so the process continues. Reflection spirals into the next level of insight and questioning. As a district, we chose to carve out time from our normal sequence of curriculum development to pause and ask ourselves some basic questions and to do a reality check with our community. We have come to the realization that such an endeavor is never completed, but there is a point in time when it is appropriate to say, "This is where we are, this is what we believe, and we will continue to test that out in practice." And so we are ready to move forward, guided by our reflective process of the past three years, a process that has made us more than ever a community of learners.

MARY ANN MANLEY *is curriculum coordinator of the Winnetka Public Schools.*

There is no shortage of issues to discuss when a community looks at its school philosophy. Listen to the voice of a parent as she describes the spirited and occasionally troubling conversation surrounding the process.

3

In the eyes of one parent

Kelley Fead

THE DOCUMENT *Winnetka: A Community of Learners* (WACOL) has been sacred in many ways, a kind of Declaration of Independence or constitution for our community's schools. That the school district decided to start reexamining this "living philosophy" formally in 1996 was both exhilarating and frightening.

Many of the original document's Thomas Jeffersons had retired in 1994. The district hired four new administrators, including Superintendent Becky van der Bogert. At PTA meetings over the next two years, she and other administrators spoke about the document's principles both while talking about how learning unfolds in the schools and in the context of school improvement efforts.

The community in those years had no shortage of issues to discuss in the aisles of the grocery stores and on the soccer fields. A school board election in 1995 saw a challenge to the slate nominated by the Winnetka Caucus Council, the nonpartisan group that fields candidates for all the village's governmental bodies. Voters were stirred, and the four members of the slate prevailed with 74 percent of the vote.

Shortly thereafter, a committee of residents and staff began evaluating the best way to handle the enrollment increase expected in

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grades 6 through 8, considering, among other options, whether to renovate a much-loved old building or add to the existing more modern middle school.

In the meantime, a group of citizens was setting up a private fundraising foundation for the schools, making sure that projects were initiated by the schools, not outside interests. And the state imposed "tax caps" on the district, limiting its ability to increase taxes without direct voter approval through a referendum.

An ancient curse is "May you live in interesting times." These times certainly fit the bill. So it was with equal parts of excitement and trepidation that many of us parents and community members saw the WACOL reexamination put on the district's agenda.

The community's high-profile involvement in the reexamination began in February 1996, when the district invited parents and community members to join faculty and staff on the *Winnetka: A Community of Learners* panel. The purpose of the thirty-member group was to "identify the topics we want a survey to address" and oversee the work of a professional market researcher, according to curriculum coordinator Mary Ann Manley, who directed the process.

Each panelist was chosen to represent a point of view, such as retiree, Winnetka newcomer, or parent of a child with special needs. The group included what I'll call "true believers" in Winnetka's approach and equally committed nonbelievers. Added to the mix were skeptics, general supporters, and people in the process of forming their opinions.

Annual surveys by the Winnetka Caucus Council showed that overall satisfaction with the schools ranged from 84 percent to 94 percent in the years 1995 to 1997. But there were (and are) some who favored a more traditional "three R's" approach, dictated from the top down. Much of their criticism centered on rigor and standardization: "We don't challenge our brightest students enough" and "Every third-grade teacher and student should be on the same page at the same time." This group was likely to find assessments other than standardized tests lacking in credibility and purpose.

Some of their statements struck terror in the hearts of many believers, who felt that Winnetka's system was (and is) special. To

their thinking, the chief virtues of the Winnetka schools are that they consider each child as an individual with talents and skills to develop and each teacher as a talented professional with gifts to offer each unique group of students. This group is likely to judge that the schools are doing their job partly by noting, "My child loves to go to school in the morning."

With feelings as strong as they were and important values expressed by all, the WACOL group opted to survey the entire community instead of doing a sampling. "If our mailing goes to the entire community, everyone is included at the outset," said one panel member. For another, the important question was, "Does everyone feel a part of it?" Yet another said she wanted to make sure we heard from all the "disenfranchised." All agreed we needed open-ended queries in addition to definitive questions to make sure we heard every issue in the community.

The next step was working in study groups. Panel members volunteered or were chosen to moderate discussions among four to six people—either parents and community members or faculty and administrators. The groups were given homework questions related to existing *Winnetka: A Community of Learners* principles, different views of teaching and learning, what we thought students should be able to do and know, and changes in society that could affect education. Study group members brought their answers and thoughts to two three-hour discussions.

The conversations were spirited and occasionally troubling. It was evident that some people based their information about the Winnetka Public Schools not on direct observation or participation but on what was going on in California or Chicago. But the goal was to uncover the education-related topics on people's minds, regardless of their relevance to what went on in our classrooms.

Consensus was not a goal of these discussions, nor did it happen in the parent-community group in which I participated. In one discussion on the arts as a means or an end in our schools, the talk was emotional, nostalgic, and chest-thumping by turns. Deep down, each of us wanted to convince the others of our widely disparate

beliefs. We ended up surfacing issues even better than we thought we could.

Built into the process was reflection, which gave each individual a chance once again to make his or her favorite points. The researcher, Kathryn Simon, principal of K. L. Simon & Associates, reported the information gathered in the groups back to the panel, asking members for their perspectives on what she saw emerging as survey topics. As Simon said, "Every issue was a priority for someone."

After much work, the questionnaire was ready and mailed to every household. Filling out the form was a commitment in itself; it took more than an hour in many cases. Again, fears were fanned among the believers that somehow in the end the schools would be diminished, not improved, by the responses. And the nonbelievers were concerned that their issues would not come to the fore. The completed numbered surveys were mailed directly to the company tabulating the results, eliminating the possibility of "stuffing the ballot box," which was a particular concern of one panelist.

The results yielded something for everyone. For the skeptics and nonbelievers, the survey indicated areas that the community felt needed discussion or improvement. For the believers, the results constituted a broad endorsement of the schools by the community. For everyone, the survey indicated an unarguable need for more and better communication.

"This is the beginning for a long-term study," van der Bogert told the panel after Simon presented her full analysis in August and September 1996. "I am thrilled with the results. We have a sense of community support and some areas to work on."

Some members of the WACOL panel recognized that the next step of the process belonged to the faculty and administrators. Others would have been just as happy to get out their pencils and start rewriting the document. Its official tasks completed, the panel reflected one last time on Simon's analysis and then disbanded.

Since then, the survey results have been reported in the local newspaper, district newsletter, and PTA meetings at all of the schools. The district newsletter continues to update the community on the faculty's work.

While the faculty studies the larger education issues, the district has already moved to make improvements in communications. The 1997 "annual plans" of each school—mandated by the state as part of the Illinois Goals Assessment Program—include steps to improve communication with parents. Van der Bogert also has instituted a call-in hour for parents and community members.

The affirmation of our schools' basic approach was echoed in other quarters. A November 1996 referendum to authorize bonds to renovate the old school building won 79 percent of the vote. And in the November 1997 school board election, the members of the caucus slate won 70 percent of the vote over a challenger.

Yet the pot is stirred almost daily. The two challengers to the caucus system in the last two school board elections are on the caucus and in a position to help choose the next school board members. The debates go on.

For me, one of the newly elected school board members and a mother of two children in the schools, the survey put into perspective the most strident voices in our community while revealing areas ripe for growth and improvement—or clarification and communication.

The process was a good one for modeling what we were talking about. Isn't one of the purposes of education to look unflinchingly at all points of view? To consider all ideas? To listen and reflect?

Some people feel that the improvements suggested were the most important results of the survey. But the positive feedback was extremely valuable as well. As Carleton W. Washburne, superintendent of the Winnetka Public Schools from 1919 to 1943, said, "Without this solid support from the great majority of citizens we could not have made the progress we did in all aspects of education."

The survey's support of the basic tenets of a Winnetka education was not a license to maintain the status quo or silence the critics. Rather, the results did—and do—inspire the faculty to probe deeply into how they teach our community's children.

Reviewing the issues presented by *Winnetka: A Community of Learners* was an opportunity to talk with my fellow Winnetkans at length about matters of importance: what we value for our children

and how we want to see them grow and develop. I look forward to a renewed—literally, made new again—*Community of Learners.* Oh, the conversations this new declaration will spark! We will all learn. And that's what it's all about.

KELLEY FEAD *is a parent of two children in the Winnetka Public Schools, a school board member, and a professional writer.*

Carleton Washburne's strong commitment to a child-centered approach, recognition of individual differences, mental health concept, and view of the school as an organization with the potential to improve society continue to provide the philosophical underpinnings for the Winnetka Public Schools.

4

The roots of tradition: A Washburne legacy

William G. Meuer

AS ONE EXAMINES the beliefs, traditions, and history of the Winnetka Public Schools, it soon becomes apparent that school superintendent Carleton W. Washburne's philosophy of education has and continues to have a strong impact on the schools today. Few educational leaders have had the effect that Washburne had on the Winnetka schools. Several questions then come to mind. If his philosophy of education was so great and so good, why didn't every school jump on the bandwagon? Was it only Winnetka? How did Washburne's early life, family, and schooling shape his beliefs as a young learner? Did Winnetka have some secret, some magic that no other community possessed? Are the "common essentials" and "group and creative activities" that Washburne believed all children in the world should experience still practiced today, perhaps under a new title, under a new rediscovered thought or belief, a revisited desire, or an expanded concept? Have school classrooms for the young learner across the country expanded to include many of the features that Washburne felt should be incorporated in all classrooms? Was community wealth a factor?

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Carleton W. Washburne was born in Chicago on December 2, 1889, into a well-educated family who respected and valued learning. His father, George F. Washburne, was a prominent obstetrician who for a time maintained a practice in Chicago. His mother, Marion Foster Washburne, was born in Northampton, Massachusetts, the daughter of a prominent Chicago physician, R. N. Foster. In addition to medicine, Dr. Foster was interested in philosophy and taught Latin, Greek, and Hebrew in Ohio. He financed his medical studies by translating volumes of Swedenborg's work from Latin into English for J. B. Lippincott and Company (Washburne, 1971).

Washburne's mother had a profound interest in writing, lecturing, and child development. She was a strong proponent of Friedrich Froebel and was well-versed on William James and G. Stanley Hall. She knew and avidly supported John Dewey. For a period of time, she did editorial work for Francis Parker. In overseeing her son's education, Mrs. Washburne felt it important that Carleton study under one of Parker's most gifted teachers and disciples, Flora J. Cooke, who herself was well known and respected in the field of education (Graham, 1971).

Washburne's father joined the Klondike gold rush and spent most of it acting as a surgeon to a mining company. With most of his time being spent in the Yukon, Dr. Washburne saw little of his children during these years. When he returned to the Chicago area, the Washburne family took up residence on a small seven-acre farm in Elkhart, Indiana, where the senior Washburne resumed his practice in medicine. It was here that young Carleton Washburne got firsthand experience with gardening, farming, and animal husbandry. The family's relocation, his father's ill health, and the problems of starting a new medical practice necessitated raising all the food possible from the tiny farm. Washburne, his brother, and his sister raised pigs, chickens, a cow, and their father's transportation—a horse. Alfalfa and corn were grown for the animals. The garden provided nearly all the fruits and vegetables the family consumed. It was here that Washburne completed his elementary education, a more traditional "lockstep" method of education than he

had experienced in the child-centered approach to learning at Parker School in Chicago (Washburne, 1971).

As he began his high school education in Elkhart, his grandfather, Dr. Foster, suggested that young Washburne come and live with him in Chicago and attend John Marshall High School. Carleton was to work for his board and room, thus offering his family some financial reprieve. Dr. Foster took advantage of this opportunity to continue to nurture Carleton's fertile interest in philosophy and religion, just as he had done with Carleton's mother. Washburne (1971) wrote, "My own lifelong interest in philosophy and religion and in the origins of words came directly from Grandpa Foster" (p. 459).

Having completed his junior year of high school at John Marshall and with the family's move to Elgin, Illinois, where Dr. Washburne would open a sanitarium, young Carleton joined the family and completed his senior year of high school there. Following graduation, young Washburne enrolled at the University of Chicago as a premedical student. After two years of study, Washburne realized that he had no interest in pursuing a career in medicine. It was then that the young man transferred to Stanford University, where he completed a bachelor of arts degree.

Following his graduation from Stanford in 1912, Washburne married Heluiz Bigelow Chandler, an art student from Philadelphia. After three months of searching for employment, Washburne took a position in a rural school, teaching thirty-five children in grades 4 through 8.

Responding to an advertisement, Washburne (1971) said, "I had never thought of becoming a teacher, but since I had to do something and was trained for nothing, I thought it worthwhile to find out what the agency might have to offer; so I went in. I learned that in those days in California anyone with a bachelor's degree could be certificated for teaching in rural elementary schools or small towns" (p. 461).

As one reflects on Washburne's first year of teaching, one sees how his own early elementary experiences and Dewey's ideas, as espoused by his mother, were all reflected in his rural teaching.

Those rural children had experiences in drama, gardening, and nature study and went on field trips. Academics were enriched with activities, stories, writing, art, and games. A school library was started, and a sex education course for students was introduced into the science program. Academic programs were developed and provided for individual student differences.

His second year of teaching found him working with seventeen youngsters who had been removed from regular education and who had special needs. Here Washburne adjusted, modified, and developed units of instruction geared to each child's interest, ability, and understanding. The individual assignments permitted each child to experience success. By the end of the year, many of these children had advanced sufficiently to permit them to return to regular education.

Having experienced some success in developing teaching units, providing for individualized instruction, planning for individual students' needs, and designing student-centered curriculum programs, Washburne accepted a position at San Francisco State Normal School working with Frederic Burk. A revolutionary in education, Burk's primary concern was instruction in school settings. How does one teacher instruct forty or more students when no two pupils are identical physically or mentally? In addressing this issue, Burk and his colleagues began revising textbooks (Washburne, 1971). Burk believed that no child should have to repeat a grade. Materials should be so well written that it would be almost impossible for a child to skip over principles that he or she did not understand.

For the youngster who needed extra practice, exercises were provided. For the child who evidenced understanding or demonstrated mastery, auxiliary exercises were not necessary. Burk believed the traditional lockstep approach to education and learning was unnatural and inconsistent with human nature. His goal was to eliminate those forces and pressures of the learning-teaching process and to replace them with simple and human motives and desires for learning. Further, Burk argued that it was advantageous for the child to correct his or her own work—to discover his or her own mistakes.

Burk's steadfast principles of education rounded out Washburne's beliefs.

It was at San Francisco State Normal School that Washburne would spend the next five years developing curriculum, working with teachers, and learning more about the instructional process; at the same time, he would begin his doctoral degree at the University of California at Berkeley (Washburne, 1971).

Winnetka: "Beautiful land"

Nearly halfway across the United States, on the shores of Lake Michigan, was a small village, Winnetka, covering a mere 3.8 square miles. The tiny settlement, founded in 1837, continued to grow and draw men and women of prominent status. The typical resident was college-educated and either in one of the professions or self-employed. Residents enjoyed a high standard of living, and their per capita income ranked among the highest in the United States.

Cultural and intellectual offerings were encouraged and supported. Civic and community issues were recognized and nurtured as a public library, a water department, and a municipal electric plant came into existence. A park district was established in 1904. The Winnetka Woman's Club was organized in 1908 "to promote the social and intellectual life of its members and to serve the best interest of the community." The Community House was dedicated in 1911, serving some fifty-one groups each week. Lowering the elevation of the railroad tracks, the Skokie Lagoon project, building a school from contributions alone, and a caucus form of government were all important in this small community. The early residents of Winnetka believed that their participation and involvement in cultural affairs in the city, serving on boards, volunteering, and underwriting and financially supporting the arts and museums were essential activities.

Though many residents and families were satisfied with the traditional offerings of the Winnetka Public Schools, some desired a

more responsive education to meet the needs of their children. Many of these same parents had been educated in eastern schools and feared that their children's education might be inferior to their own.

One member of the Woman's Club and a member of the board of education, Gertrude Lieber, had read about Burk's progressive influences. She suggested that Burk be contacted and asked for assistance in looking for a new superintendent for Winnetka. Burk recommended Washburne, and at a meeting on January 9, 1919, the board agreed to hire him (Winnetka Public Schools, 1919).

The "common essentials": A research-based curriculum

Educators familiar with the Winnetka Plan realize that one of the hallmarks of this plan was individual curriculum materials for children, known as the "common essentials." They included spelling, language, math, and reading. Washburne believed that if knowledge or a skill was necessary to nearly every normal person, every child should have an opportunity to master it. Because differences were known to exist among children, it was obvious that mastery could not be obtained by all children—or those in any group of children—in the same length of time and with the same amount of practice. Therefore, it was essential that schools and teachers provide varying amounts of time and instructional material for different children. Coupled with this plan were two other components—the Department of Educational Research and the Winnetka Educational Press (Plagge, 1988).

Washburne used research as a barometer for measuring student success, for program and curriculum evaluation, and as an instrument or tool in the teaching-learning process. With this emphasis on research and the fact that research was so much a part of the total educational process in Winnetka, the Department of Educational Research was established. Staffed by district personnel, the department was financed through private grants and by the school district. The studies generated by this department had a direct

impact on the educational programs in Winnetka and led to an always changing and evolving curriculum. Many of the educational materials used by the students in Winnetka were the result of this research. These materials were then produced by the Winnetka Educational Press.

The Department of Educational Research was an integral system of the public schools. Longitudinal studies were completed in mathematics and in stages of growth and development in young children, establishing appropriate academic standards and levels as related to growth and development (Beatty, 1988). Aspects of intelligence were measured and then correlated with academic success. The emotional development of the adolescent was studied. Time spent teaching a given concept as related to mastery for the young learner drove considerable research. What was the opportune time for teaching a particular concept, and when was the child most ready to learn that concept? This was an ever-intriguing question. Much of the research was published in professional media, including the *Thirty-Eighth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, the *Journal of Education Research*, and the *Elementary School Journal*, to mention only a few.

Another aspect of Washburne's philosophy of education is exemplified in the second part of the school day. This part of the day, which was devoted to group and creative activities, encouraged children to develop interests and provided time for the stimulation of the child's creativity. It gave children a sense of belonging, a sense of group identity and social responsibility.

There was a body of knowledge to be mastered in both science and social studies. These two areas of curriculum were most often used as a framework for implementing the group and creative activities. Units in science and social studies were often correlated with art, music, drama, movement, literature, and writing, all of which enhanced the learning process for the children. Group activities and projects gave children opportunities in social responsibility, recognition, and problem solving. These activities responded to the individual interests and creative components of the children.

Another department that offered assistance to children, parents, and staff was the Department of Educational Counsel. Its primary mission was to help each child achieve full potential and feel a measure of success and confidence. This department consisted of psychologists, social workers, speech clinicians, and nurses. Teachers of children with disabilities were added to this department. Today, Public Law 94-142 has mandated certain rights for students. Washburne insisted on the same rights for students nearly eighty years ago without a law.

Sex education was a normal part of the science program at the seventh-grade level (Powers, 1988). Today this unit of study continues to be treated in an open and scientific manner, and students have accepted it in the same way. Over the years, parents have worked with the staff in reviewing and updating the curriculum materials, but never with the intent to drop this program as a unit of study for students, in spite of the occasional parent who has become concerned over the frankness of the instruction.

Field trips have been preserved and valued as components of group and creative activities. Not only have field trips enhanced the learning process, but they have continued to be a viable method for providing firsthand, on-site observations and participation for students in ways not possible in the classroom.

The population of the community continued to grow, as did student enrollment. It was evident that another school was necessary. The board of education owned a parcel of land at the far west end of the village. It was the board's idea that a new junior high school be built on that site. There was bitter opposition to moving the upper grades from the elementary schools. However, many citizens supported the board's idea. They believed that a new modern building with suitable programs could better meet the needs of the young adolescent. The community supported this issue at the polls in 1919 and 1920 (Dickinson, 1956).

Money from taxes lagged, and under state restrictions the board lacked the borrowing power to construct a new school. The citizens, including many of the opponents of the junior high school, carried on a campaign to get voluntary contributions to construct

the new school. Contributions ranged from a couple of dollars to $10,000. Louis Kuppenheimer contributed $60,000 for a large assembly hall in memory of his daughter. The Alschuler family donated a wing of the building with the understanding that space would be made available for a nursery school. Housing a nursery school within a public junior high school was another new concept, and Winnetka was among the first to adopt it. The nursery school would soon offer the junior high school students opportunities for service and child care study.

In the early 1920s, when Skokie School was built, it housed grades 7 and 8—a new concept in school organization. The group and creative activities were made available through committees, clubs, electives, and advisories. The school offered students opportunities for service, leadership, recognition, and community involvement. Corporations were formed, offering students practice in group dynamics and decision-making skills. Corporations differed in that they offered students opportunities that focused on economics and the social and political needs of a larger society. If one were to visit the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade today at Washburne School, now referred to as a middle school, one would quickly observe a viable elective program, active advisories, and a number of service clubs. Their motto is "To serve is to achieve."

Carleton Washburne placed a high priority on staff development, creating opportunities for leadership, recognition, and professional growth. Though the fringe benefit program has undergone revisions, changes, and alterations, the basic reward incentive remains. It is possible for teachers to earn initiative units of credit, thereby increasing their salary, in a variety of ways—graduate courses, travel, research, and writing or publication. Washburne encouraged and supported his staff members in their efforts to write for publication.

In an effort to train and offer staff development, Washburne implemented a summer school for teachers in 1929. Since six weeks was not sufficient time for professional development, the Graduate Teachers College of Winnetka was established in 1932. With the cooperation of Perry Dunlap Smith of the North Shore Coun-

try Day School and Flora Cooke at Parker School, a forerunner of the master of arts in teaching (M.A.T.) program was developed. The students trained under the guidance of the Winnetka staff in an internship format, which also included seminars, readings, and workshops (Stern, 1988).

As a longtime educator with the Winnetka Schools, I believe the schools have been and continue to be educational laboratories. The curriculum, methodology, and programs were and must continue to be evaluated, modified, updated, and revised in light of the needs of each child, current research, the demands from society, and an ever-changing world. Educational themes in Winnetka during Washburne's superintendency included the recognition of individual differences, the child-centered approach, the mental health concept, the scientific movement, and the view of the school as an organization to improve society. Carleton Washburne's strong commitment to these central themes of education and his never-ending determination to disseminate his educational ideas and research findings brought and continue to bring recognition to the Winnetka Public Schools, the staff, and the man himself.

I believe that many of those same themes remain today not only in Winnetka but in good schools across the country. They may perhaps be found under a new title or a new label—be it whole language, a balanced curriculum, hands-on math and science, environmental education, accountability, site-based management, assessment, thematic approach, applied mathematics, or the whole child.

Perhaps Carleton Washburne (1969) said it best when he said, "As each child is a new creation, as life is ever growing, ever changing, so must education . . . be ever developing, never finished."

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Revising a district philosophy places the responsibility for critical appraisal on individual educators. Participating in the process, teachers define for themselves what is truth and what is the direction for our future.

5

Voices of the teachers

Idyth Zimbler

IT WAS THE KIND OF steamy summer day when you might see people sipping lemonade al fresco, sunbathing on the beaches, or driving with a pack of sweaty children in the back of a van to a swimming pool. Rather than luxuriating in the laziness of summer, I was involved in a meeting about the restructuring of our sixth-grade program. Fifteen members of our middle school faculty were engaged in an animated discussion about our advisory program. After several hours of discussing the advantages and disadvantages of different options, we were struggling to reach consensus. One new faculty member, rather exasperated, lamented loudly, "Do you always *have* to do things democratically?" Conversation came to an abrupt halt. Those of us who had been in the district for several years had become tolerant of the tension between the pressure to finish a task and the consensus needed for a decision.

As I heard the question, I mentally left the conversation at hand and meandered back in time to April 1996, when our district began the democratic undertaking of revisiting our philosophical statement, *Winnetka: A Community of Learners* (WACOL). There were many changes taking place in the district faculty due to early retirement offers by the state. With so many new faculty members and

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administrators, we needed to ask the following questions: Do we still believe in this philosophy? The world has changed in the past ten years. Does this document still reflect our values? In each of the faculty bulletins, a call for teachers who were interested in leading the revisiting process appeared. From the interested teachers and administrators, the WACOL Task Force was created to design a plan for the process.

In the task force discussions, teachers and administrators spoke with equal voices, sharing opinions and suggestions. It would have been more time-efficient if the administrative team had presented a plan to us. However, our district has a history of democratic participation. Therefore, many hours were spent formulating the plans; as a result, they were *our* plans. Inviting and valuing our opinions was and continues to be empowering. Entrusted with the future direction of the district, we realized the power of this level of inclusion. We decided to share our invitation with the faculty at large as our first step in the revisiting process.

Challenging, reconsidering, and reaffirming our beliefs

We began by devoting an "institute day" to discovering the answers to three questions:

As a teacher, what do you feel is the essence of what you do?
What do you feel passionately about?
What is it about Winnetka that promotes a sense of loyalty and connection?

Sandy Karaganis, chair of the task force and principal of Samuel Sewall Greeley Elementary School, provided a short history of the writing of the original WACOL document. We gave teachers time for thinking and writing. Following the writing opportunity, we met in small groups, led by the WACOL Task Force members, to cull the recurring themes. We ended our planning session hoping that the district faculty felt empowered by being included in this

process. We wanted to give the faculty a voice in the direction of the district, and we were going to *create* the time to do it. We hoped that it could kindle the brand of democratic spirit that would carry us through the WACOL revisiting process.

During the morning of the April institute day, when teachers were given time to reflect, they repeatedly thanked us for allowing them to "get off the merry-go-round" and spend some time challenging, reconsidering, and reaffirming their beliefs. We requested their written reflections so that the task force could proceed. These comments, when read together, provide a window into our values, our passions, and our loyalty and connections to Winnetka:

What I feel passionately about changes all the time, but children are at the core of everything I do or think about in the classroom.

I feel passionately about keeping the sense of wonder alive in education. I hope that I will always have a sense of wonder myself. I believe that a sense of wonder is what enables us to continue our education throughout our lives, formally or informally. . . . One of my favorite scientists, Richard Feynman, describes eloquently the "pleasure of finding things out." I think the human spirit is fueled by exploration into the unknown.

Foremost is my responsibility to interact with each student as an individual. I need to look for their strengths and use them as a vehicle for teaching.

One of our main goals should be to strive for a sense of democracy and community in our classrooms through establishing a sense of rights, responsibilities, and empathy for others.

I see myself primarily as a "balancer." Daily, it is the balance between child in relation to self, group, and individual; discussing and experimenting; leading and following; guiding gently and watchful, informed observing; supporting and nurturing and encouraging and stretching; needs of the children and needs of the parents and needs of myself; academic learning and emotional and social learning; work and play.

I am passionate about encouraging children to develop confidence in their opinions, ideas, and beliefs about the world. Over the chalkboard in my room, in large block letters, I have the words "RAISE YOUR VOICE." Many parents and teachers at first think I'm crazy. Why would I want my children to raise their voices? I explain to the children that I want them to have a voice, to develop their way of processing and expressing their feelings, to raise and grow as individuals in the world.

I feel passionate about giving every child an opportunity to feel successful and to be part of the process of creating that success. [Children need] a safe, secure environment conducive to cultivating the talents and energy children bring each day.

My core, my essence, as an educator is to help provide a place where my children, parents, and I can come together to raise healthy children. . . . I am passionate about protecting my students' childhood.

We are valued as professionals, and we are given the freedom to be active thinkers and individuals in our various approaches to teaching; our interaction with children, parents, and the community is the *focus*, the *heart* of the district.

I value the sense of autonomy that is permitted and respected, not only for the children, but for each faculty member, a shared philosophy in the development of the whole child—socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively.

It is the sense of community that provides connectedness and loyalty. This is a community that cares to strive for the best, and [people] are willing to learn from their mistakes. It is a community that provides many opportunities for all ages. It has a sense of pride and the traditions of the past. It is an established community with roots and history. This is so important in making a community strong.

The extraordinarily deep commitment to the profession of teaching is very evident. When I was hired, I felt the unusual sense of personal connection unlike any other school system where I had worked. What I thought was too fantastic was actually true—that a school district existed where the *first priority* was children.

Breaking down barriers

Faculty voices emerged from the opportunity to respond. The next task force meeting generated questions: Is public education at its best when the community and faculty share common values? Does our community share our values and sense of purpose? We planned the community survey that Mary Ann Manley, district curriculum coordinator, described in Chapter Two. We defined community in its broadest sense, inclusive of people who lived in Winnetka and faculty who worked in the schools.

To be ready to hear both what we shared and how we differed, we invited those who might disagree with what we do to have a

voice. We were breaking the boundaries between our traditional role as "expert" and the community's role as "client." With both the community and the faculty surveyed, we hoped to find commonalities and to give ourselves a sense of direction that would further our research for writing our new philosophical statement.

In the survey results, the faculty and community renewed the following beliefs:

- Students should be lifelong learners.
- The school should support emotional and social development as well as academic and intellectual growth.
- Students should have an opportunity to learn at their own pace.
- The school charter extends well beyond the core subject areas, encompassing many different skill and subject areas and many different aspects of development.
- Respecting and protecting childhood is very important to promoting children's overall emotional development and well-being.
- The schools should teach and promote an understanding of cultural commonalities and differences.
- Teaching cooperation is an important element of the educational process.

We were reassured that both the faculty and the community valued these core beliefs. In the teachers' responses, we noted an interest in the arts as a cognitive domain. We were dissatisfied with our knowledge in this area. From the community's responses, however, several areas of concern emerged. We heard a questioning of the role of cooperation versus competition. We heard a questioning of our ability to challenge *all* children academically. As we began to discuss these issues among ourselves, we recognized that these two issues were a part of larger issues that the faculty itself was eager to research. We would benefit from an examination of these issues in their broader contexts of the role of democracy in education and in teaching, learning, and thinking. As we broke down the barriers between expert and community, we found that the tensions provided a direction for further study. Continuing our

mission to research these areas would, in turn, inform our rewriting of the WACOL document.

Evolving as a focused community of learners

After extensive study of faculty responses to the institute day and the survey, along with an exhaustive look at the community's responses, we identified three areas to pursue in more depth: teaching for a democracy; teaching, thinking, and learning; and the arts. Task force members read research in order to select a variety of articles on each topic. Our 1996–97 school year was divided into the three general segments, culminating in extended faculty discussions. Task force members led the discussions and planned the events.

Our collaboration produced an unexpected amount of energy. How refreshing it was to step back from day-to-day efforts to think about larger issues that were vital to us as professionals. Faculty members commented on the importance of having other teachers leading the discussions in areas in which neither were experts, capitalizing on our colleagues and friends. Everyone had permission to be a learner. The meetings throughout the year ranged from voluntary to required, yet we continually heard how revitalized people felt. They wanted to know more. They knew that their voice mattered, and they wanted that voice to be an educated one.

The year of study group exploration was destined to end with a summer institute, beginning on the last day of school. The first day of the institute was going to be required attendance. The second and third days were to be optional. At first we wondered, could people really get involved with a philosophical topic on this last day of the school year? Would the excitement be contagious, or would people just be eager for the summer to begin?

Generating powerful discussions: The blending of national and local expertise

Throughout the year in the study group meetings, there was continued interest in some of the authors whom we had read. At the task force planning sessions, we decided to invite some of these authors to speak, serving as the catalyst for each day's discussion at the summer institute. Dr. William Ayers, author and professor of education at the University of Illinois at Chicago, addressed democracy in education. Dr. Larry Lowery from Berkeley and the Lawrence School for Science delivered a lecture on the latest research on the brain and thinking and learning. Dr. Bennett Reimer, recently retired dean of the School of Music at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and Dr. John W. Beattie, professor of music emeritus at Northwestern, spoke about the importance of the arts to cognitive development to an exhilarated audience at the Museum of Contemporary Art, where we had an opportunity to experience art as we learned about the arts from a theoretical basis.

Teachers were encouraged to take an active leadership role. Before each speaker, the task force asked teachers to share their personal stories and perspectives with the entire audience. Teachers participated in panel discussions after each guest speaker lectured. We wanted to make an important statement about the value of our experiences and insights. Scheduled at a leisurely pace, with long lunch hours and with substantial time devoted to small group sessions, these days allowed us pleasures of reflection and collegiality rarely achieved during the hectic school year. We needed to give ourselves time to reflect on the power of the day's discussion.

To our delight, each day was more invigorating than the next. At the end of each day of the summer institute, we asked people to capture thoughts or questions that still remained. We reminded them that these comments were *their* opportunity to make *their* voices heard as we moved forward in our rewriting process. The charge was intentionally open-ended. Repeated themes are represented by the following comments:

On educating for democracy

Rethinking is fundamental to teaching, and yet we look for answers that are solid, unshifting. We seek comfort in that stability. Instability and the uncomfortable process of continually asking and seeking better teaching, however difficult, is the core of true learning, of becoming . . . but it is hard.

Both democracy and teaching at its best are about increasing and deepening the level of participation in one's community. Both are processes, not end points.

Obstacles to democracy in classrooms and schools often lie within ourselves as educators. What are some ways that we can become more comfortable with democratic teaching practices?

Democracy is helping each child find his or her own voice.

Bill Ayers's comments about believing in each child's capacity, together with his belief that the classroom is a microcosm of the world and an appropriate place to model democracy, made me feel that we are on the right track with inclusion.

We need to be comfortable with conflict.

Helping children understand the balance of personal freedom versus a responsibility to the group is the essence of a democratic classroom.

There are different levels of structure and freedom that all need to be met within the classroom for the reason that no two students are alike. Some thrive on structure, while others thrive on freedom.

On teaching, thinking, and learning

Dr. Lowery spoke of curiosity and how it stimulates connectors. He also mentioned chemical inhibitors when stress occurs. What does this do developmentally to children under stress? How can we as educators help?

If our boys mature neurologically at a different rate than our girls, is an age-graded curriculum the best way to meet the developmental level of our students?

I would like to explore the idea of *time*, which seems to underlie our discussions of both teaching for democracy and teaching in zones of cognitive development. How can we restructure, reconceptualize time in the classroom to explore ideas in greater depth with more time?

Does content instruction—as opposed to critical thinking, problem solving, and inquiry instruction—lead to a less creative, less inventive society?

I am fascinated by the brain's capacity to fragment characteristics of ideas, concepts, and experience and then resynthesize them at a later time.

How are memories related to current brain research? What does that mean for our use of memory boards, portfolios, and so on?

Any subject is appropriate at any level if curiosity about it exists with the students.

On the arts

We must broaden our own knowledge and experience with the arts so that we can incorporate them into our teaching as necessary and legitimate tools. The discrete subject area model is obsolete: time to start experimenting!

Art as a means of expression should be as valued as writing.

I appreciate the chance to think about the theories of aesthetic teaching, since I feel that I have just built mine on instinct.

We need to transfer our value of the arts to our parents by reporting and talking about the ways of knowing.

The arts are one of the most important avenues of communication for many children. Is that avenue valued in all the subject areas?

We are all on the ever-changing canvas together as ever-changing individuals and as ever-changing community characterized by interdependence. Pass the brush around.

Intelligence is the ability to make increasingly refined discriminations in order to make increasingly fine connections.

Pursuing my own WACOL interests

The summer institute catapulted us into the summer, giving us many issues to mull over during the months ahead. As part of my WACOL interests, this past summer, I attended Harvard's Project Zero symposium, MIND (Multiple Intelligences/New Directions). Dr. Howard Gardner and Dr. David Perkins, both from Harvard University, were lecturers and led discussions. The Project Zero researchers held mini-sessions on their current topics of research. This ideal milieu provided me with an opportunity to clarify my observations of the WACOL process.

Participants included teachers, administrators, and professors from the United States as well as a significant worldwide community. People from Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Costa Rica, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, Greece, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines,

Canada, and the United States came together to discuss the implications of the multiple intelligence theory in a school setting. Two memories from this symposium came to mind as our district ended its second year's work in revisiting and reassessing the WACOL philosophical statement.

Listening to international perceptions: More questions than answers

At the symposium, there were frequent opportunities for discussions among the participants. So many times in introductions, people would recognize the Winnetka Public Schools name and then comment on what they knew about it. It was almost unsettling to realize our reputation.

One group of educators from England related that they had received many of our students over the years and were always impressed with the child-centered focus of our report cards. "You teachers in Winnetka really understand how to meet individual needs," remarked one teacher. "I am always amazed when I meet a child after reading a Winnetka Public Schools file. You draw quite an accurate picture of the child with words," said another. "Yes," piped in another, "your philosophy is so clear. Your students come to us as active participants in their learning."

In another discussion, teachers from Ireland were curious about the work we have done with Reggio Emilia, a preprimary school in Italy. They described us as a school system willing to recognize the whole child. They described us as having a living philosophy, one that isn't just on paper, a model for others who are interested in progressive education.

Then one teacher from Colombia joined the conversation, asking me how we hired our teachers so that we can carry out the philosophy for which we are famous. When I began to explain that we were revisiting our philosophical document and began to detail the process that was involved in that revisiting, her reaction resonated with the others in the group, who nodded their heads in agreement.

She was amazed that we were taking the time we needed to really think about what we do with the children.

At this symposium, I experienced pride in being a part of the Winnetka Public Schools but felt overwhelmed with the responsibility that comes from being known around the country and the world. Implicit in the participants' assumptions about our district was that we possessed a surefooted stance in our philosophy and in its execution. In our WACOL revisiting, however, we feel grounded in common beliefs, yet we have more questions than answers. We are wondering how our lectures and discussions and readings find their way not only into a new document but into the classroom as well. How will what we do with children every day change as a result of what we have learned?

Reflecting on thinking and the WACOL process

Still another memory from the Harvard experience swirls around in my head as the third year in the WACOL process evolves. On the third day of the symposium, after being bombarded with three lectures by Dr. Gardner and breakout sessions with his researchers, I attended a lecture given by Dr. Perkins. His area of expertise is critical thinking, more specifically what he calls "thinking dispositions." Dr. Perkins asserts that there are four problems with human thinking that should affect what we do in a classroom: (1) thinking is too hasty, (2) thinking is too narrow, (3) thinking is too fuzzy, and (4) thinking is generally sprawling. He recommends, therefore, four thinking dispositions that we should address as we create school settings for children. We must teach children how to (1) give thinking time, (2) make their thinking broad and adventurous, (3) make their thinking clear and deep, and (4) make their thinking focused and organized.

Giving thinking more time

As I listened to Dr. Gardner's theories, I realized that this charge of using the four thinking dispositions is as important for teachers

as it is for children. And in fact, in our WACOL process, it is exactly what we are trying to do as we try to articulate a shared philosophy of our district.

Disposition 1: We are giving our thinking time. We are beginning the third year of our revisiting. We have created a task force, conducted a survey, formed study groups, created an institute, and developed a structure for independent research. Yet in each one of our conversations, there is tension between getting the document written and sorting through and analyzing an information overload that fosters many inquiries. We need even more time.

Making thinking broad and adventurous

Throughout the 1996–97 school year, faculty members collected, read, and discussed articles in study groups, at after-school meetings, on institute days, and at faculty meetings. Dr. Bena Kallick, a consultant, worked with the task force to help us focus our momentum toward our 1997–98 goal: to study issues of importance as they relate to the school and community and to develop a large and inclusive vision of what it means to be educated. As one question leads to another, the web of inquiry that we have created flourishes.

Disposition 2: We are making our thinking broad and adventurous. The more adventurous we get in our thinking, the more unclear our end point becomes. We need to be able to accept uncertainty for a while.

Making thinking clearer and deeper

In an effort to clarify our thinking, the 1997–98 year culminated with an institute facilitated by Dr. Kallick to which we invited Dr. Ayers, Dr. Lowery, and Dr. Reimer, who shared their expertise in the areas already identified. Faculty members had the opportunity to discuss these topics across grade levels and buildings. The picture that we were creating of teaching and learning in Winnetka was expanding to include many perspectives. We were trying to accept new truths and move forward. Change is not easy.

Disposition 3: We are making our thinking clearer and deeper. At the end of the institute, our intellectual curiosity was piqued, our souls

were nourished, old friendships were renewed, and new faculty connections were made.

Making thinking more focused and organized

As institute participants, we set out to describe what we felt were the messages from our two-year-long study. One group came up with a visual description of our revisiting process. We decided that over the summer, we would try to create visual documentation that could be displayed in each school. Creating this visual documentation forced us to integrate and structure our thinking. It was not an easy process. When we began to put images and words to paper, we were cognizant of the connotations, but we persevered. This visual documentation hangs today in each of our schools and represents the efforts of many in this district community.

Disposition 4: We are making our thinking more focused and organized. As we become clearer in our intentions, we must ask ourselves, "Do we 'walk the talk'?" We should not be content unless what we say is what we do. How do we document that our philosophy is alive in the classroom? It is a question for our future WACOL pursuits.

Examining our responsibilities

As the memories of the Project Zero symposium continue to linger, I look forward to continuing our WACOL process for the 1997–98 school year. Working in a district known to an international community brings with it a demanding responsibility to articulate clearly and thoughtfully what we believe is good and necessary for children. Dr. Gardner noted that anything worth teaching children should answer these questions: What is truth? What is beauty? What is good? If what we are teaching helps children get a little closer to understanding the answers to those three basic questions, according to Dr. Gardner, we can feel that we are responsible educators. Our responsibility, our ownership, comes through the WACOL process—yes, in Winnetka, we always have to do things democratically. There is a payoff.

Working in a district that values reflective practice, supports opportunities like attending the Project Zero symposium and participating in the WACOL process, and works to define for itself what is truth, what is beauty, and what is good provides us with the freedom to create a direction for our future. We have only begun to top our own potential as each of our voices becomes part of the collective voice of the Winnetka Public Schools.

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Transitions: Influences, inspirations, and inquiries

TEACHERS WHO ARE ARBITERS of their own growth require opportunities for reflecting not only on their professional practice but on their personal growth as well. The following articles share this process with readers.

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Preparing our students for a democratic society demands that we constantly challenge ourselves to teach the principles of democracy as well as model them in our classrooms. It also requires us to reach beyond the classroom for life's lessons for our students.

Educating for democracy

Daniel Schwartz

RECENT CONVERSATIONS I've had with colleagues have raised many questions about democracy in education. After much reflection, I've concluded that the key issue is how to educate about and for democracy in ways that matter. Teaching students about democracy is one side of the equation. Good teachers incorporate democratic practices and procedures into daily classroom life. Good schools model democratic principles in meaningful ways. This by itself is not enough. As progressive educators, we must also teach our students the other side of the equation: how and why they can (and should) participate in a democracy. As we explore the dynamic between teaching about and for democracy, we must also keep an eye on the realities of our communities and the world at large. If we lose sight of the global picture, we risk divorcing our teaching from the world that our students will enter. It is this more universal view, I believe, that makes a democratic education truly valuable. It prepares our students to apply their new knowledge, questions, and visions to the world in which they will live and gives them the power to change and improve that world. In this way, as Roland Barth (1990) suggests, we can lead our classrooms and schools from being a community of learners to being a community of leaders.

Hearing the many voices of Winnetka teachers wonderfully illustrates the many ways that creative educators can teach democratically. From collectively writing class rules to small group projects to teaching students to listen and appreciate other points of view, it is

clear that there are many examples of democratic practices in classrooms across the district. Our schools bear similar evidence of democracy, with careful attention paid to involving students and faculty in important decisions and discussions. Democracy is a messy thing, and often, in the short term, it "bogs down" progress. We recognize that only by experiencing and learning from this "mess" can we teach our students some difficult lessons about democracy that extend beyond rules and procedures. To lead a democratic classroom, teachers must agree to let go of a certain amount of control and share the leadership of their classes with students. This is often difficult for teachers to do, as it seems easier to teach in an undemocratic, authoritarian fashion. The successful resolution of this struggle is one of the keys to democratic classrooms and schools.

I am concerned that too often we are content to succeed at the classroom and school levels in important but limited ways. I don't think that we teach our students how and why they can apply their democratic experiences in the real world. For example, last year at our middle school, students were very upset that the village was planning to ban skateboarding from village streets. During the next few weeks, students often complained about the ban and how unfair it was. Several even went to the village council and complained about the unfairness of this "adult action." Not once did these students think that they could influence this process. Not once did they feel empowered to add their voices to the dialogue and choose to participate and advocate for a constructive solution to the problem. Eventually, as I observed this process, I extended an invitation to a number of the more concerned students; a small group was organized. They wrote a petition asking the village to allow skateboarding and then approached the local park district to consider building a skatepark so that kids would have a place to play. Applying what one has learned in school to real-life situations outside of school is the true test for how well knowledge is understood. The initial inability of these students to act is a direct result, I believe, of our ineffective teaching for democracy. Modeling democratic practices in classrooms is only the first step toward educating for democratic

action. Democracy is not learned as a spectator; one must participate to understand its power and intricacies.

Working toward becoming more effective democratic teachers and administrators and improving the practice of our craft in the schoolhouse are excellent goals for each of us. We must be ever conscious of connecting our democratic practice to the realities of the world around us. If we fail in this, what we teach becomes superfluous, so disconnected from the world in which our students live as to be useless and easily discarded. About ten years ago, I was teaching civics and history in the Boston Public Schools. During that winter, Carol Stuart and her husband (a Caucasian couple) were shot while sitting in their car. Carol died; her husband survived. The husband told police that an African American man had attempted to rob them, then shot them and fled. The police mounted a massive manhunt that lasted several weeks, instituting a "stop and search procedure." This allowed police to stop and search any person "suspect" in the murder (meaning, of course, any black person). Many of my students and their friends and family members were stopped and searched. Some were told to drop their pants right on the street. Eventually, the police discovered that Mr. Stuart had lied and used the racist atmosphere of the city to deflect suspicion from himself. *He* had killed his wife and then blamed a person of color for the crime.

As a civics teacher, how could I teach about democracy in my classroom, encourage students to attend student council meetings, and get involved in other ways without discussing and dealing with this out-of-school situation? Not to encourage conversations about the murder, racism, or the police would so disassociate democracy from their world as to make it irrelevant. I initiated many discussions with students about the Carol Stuart case, the ensuing police reaction, and the ugliness of both. Based on our conversations, students were encouraged to think about ways that they could work to change their community so that these sort of crimes (both the murder and the stop-and-search reaction) would not happen again. In this way, the class assignments on democracy, the inclusive environment in the classroom, and the hours spent on student council

were applied in real life. It is this balance that I feel we must work harder to create and maintain.

There is another level of democratic education, I believe, to which we should pay attention. We must teach and nurture our students in ways that encourage independent thinking and social action. Democracy, like a good curriculum, is a work in progress; it is alive and must be constantly worked on if it is to be effective for all its citizens. If we do not teach our students to understand what democracy and justice mean, if they do not choose to participate in our democracy, if they are unable to think for themselves, the results can be catastrophic. The Holocaust reminds us of the fragility of democracy. One adult who attended school in Germany in the early 1930s remembers his school experience clearly: "We were taught history as a series of facts. . . . If we tried to relate ideas we got from literature or history to current events, our teachers changed the subject. . . . That was one of the worst features of the way we were educated . . . ; we simply were unable to draw conclusions. Or perhaps our teachers and our parents deliberately tried to protect us from real life, either because they thought of us as children, or because they were already vaguely frightened about the future and didn't want to become involved themselves" (Stoskopf and Strom, 1990, p. 3).

We do not really have a choice; there is no null option. Either we empower our students so that they can change themselves and the world in which they live, or we contribute to their silence. Our own district literature is quite clear on this point: "Rather than being overwhelmed or apathetic, children must gain greater insight and courage which will empower them to work toward the resolution of human problems everywhere" (Winnetka Public Schools, 1990, p. 1). We must adapt our teaching styles, perspectives, and expectations to reflect this approach. As John Dewey wrote nearly three-quarters of a century ago, "If you want schools to perpetuate the present order, . . . then one type of intellectual method . . . is indicated. But if one conceives . . . that schools should strive to educate with social change in view by producing individuals not complacent about what already exists, and equipped with desires and abilities to

assist in transforming it, quite a different method and content is indicated" ([1928] 1964, p. 174).

I believe that we have made important strides toward becoming democratic educators. The lessons we have learned are worth sharing with colleagues across the country, however popular or unpopular they are. The challenge we face is to make democracy in the schoolhouse relevant and contributive to our students' understanding of a world filled with both beauty and pain, opportunities and inequities, equality and prejudice, peace and violence. Camus wrote beautifully about this very point: "I know that the great tragedies of history often fascinate men with approaching horror. Paralyzed, they cannot wake up their minds to do anything but wait. So they wait, and one day the Gorgon devours them. But I should like to convince you that strength of heart, intelligence, and courage are enough to stop fate and sometimes reverse it" (1974). Our students have a tall task ahead of them; we must give them the tools and courage to tackle it.

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Reexamination of our philosophy would not be complete without taking a close look at the role of the arts in our district. Though a commitment to the arts has been a strong tradition, new information on the development of the creative process informs our transitions in this area.

Education in the fine arts

Sanae Willoughby

THROUGHOUT THE COURSE of civilization, societies have made judgments, consciously and unconsciously, as to which endeavors and accomplishments best represent the "measure of social greatness." Consistently, most societies, from the primitive to the developed, have included the fine arts in one form or another among what they believed to be their greatest endeavors and accomplishments. Consequently, the social status of the fine arts is well established as equal among other areas of learning and achievement. One concludes, therefore, that there is an intrinsic social value in the fine arts; significantly, that conclusion has stood the test of time over several millennia.

If it is the collective wisdom of civilization that the fine arts are among its greatest achievements, is it not baffling that many American educators do not accept the importance of the fine arts in an academic program? Further, since educators wield enormous power in the intellectual development of a nation, the pervasive neglect of the arts in education is not just baffling but seriously troubling.

Notwithstanding the historical record, contemporary nonaccepting educators must believe themselves wiser than their predecessors in matters of education in the fine arts. If so, we must turn to arguments in support of the arts in education that are more practical and less intellectual; and those arguments are in themselves persuasive.

The teaching of the fine arts is a major strategic contributor to the teaching of every other subject. Two fundamental requirements

of teaching should be that we help students acquire tools and that we help students develop the creative process. The distinction between the two provides the basis for understanding the connection between the fine arts and other subjects and the contribution of the fine arts to those other subjects.

In subjects other than the fine arts, the acquisition of tools is primary and the creative process is secondary; in a fine art program that is properly conceived and administered, the reverse is true. As a consequence, the total educational program, if properly conceived and administered, offers an exciting opportunity for students to transfer the creative impulses they have developed in the fine art programs to other subjects. That opportunity is significant; it should be the foundation of education.

Throughout life, people acquire a weighty collection of tools. But the acquisition of tools alone does not guarantee the spark of genius that results in an Einstein or a Shakespeare. That spark results from the inspiration of human creativity. Shakespeare knew the mechanics of the English language, and Einstein had his mastery of physics—the tools of their respective trades—but that is not what guaranteed their genius. The genius of these two lay in their ability to move beyond the boundaries of convention, to push, to explore, to challenge—to *create.*

One must draw the conclusion that in education, the development of the creative process is paramount to the development of the child as a whole. Further, it is the fine arts program, if properly constructed and administered, that instills in children the challenges, the intellectual stimulus, and the excitement of the creative process. Strategically, the design of the total education program must allow for—indeed, provide for—the fine art experience to be transferred: the application of the tools to other subjects. Educators must understand that education in the fine arts is not frivolous dabbling in paint pots, is not the mastery of a pair of scissors, is not the production of crafts for arbitrary purposes, is not the production of artwork associated with the special events of the calendar, and is not a leisure-time activity reward. A fine arts program must inspire children to use all the intellectual tools they have been born

with and acquired and to use them in a creative way, whether they are the tools of language, mathematics, chemistry, or physics.

To achieve their primary goal, the development of the creative process, the fine arts require a program as carefully constructed and administered as that of any other subject. The perception that an arts program is arbitrarily assembled, casually administered, and available at whim is totally incorrect; implementing one that way is irresponsible. Certainly the interjection of frivolous activities into the arts program—special calendar event art activities, for example—is particularly destructive to continuity in the serious development of the creative process. A lesson taken out of sequence or out of context is just as irrelevant to the student in the art program as it is in any other program.

The transfer of the creative process from the fine arts program to other academic programs must be the primary linkage. However, other linkages are possible through the coordinated use of subject matter and the application of tools. Provided that there is serious consultation and careful planning among teachers, these secondary linkages, if achieved, yield important benefits to students in all subjects in addition to the primary benefits achieved through the transfer and development of the creative process. Most frequently, conventional attempts to establish secondary linkages are made using history. But many other linkages are possible; consider the application of tools.

Like the students of other subjects, students in the arts must acquire a significant set of tools, and it will come as a surprise to some educators that these tools are familiar ones: the understanding of form and structure, of order, of spatial relationships, of intangible as well as tangible relationships; of aberrant, spontaneous, accidental, uncontrollable, and unexplainable results; of continuity and discontinuity, of harmony and discord, of fluidity and motion, and of control and logic—to identify only a few. Of course, these are very familiar tools scattered across physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, astronomy, language—indeed, across all subjects. The possibility exists, therefore, for program linkages between the fine arts and all other subjects, and the design of such a program is in itself

an exercise in creativity if program creators are serious in establishing those linkages. Students at every level understand and are enriched by these linkages, which benefit the development of the creative process in every subject.

There is no implication in these observations that the creative process is captive in the fine arts. On the contrary, the creative process must be the soul of every subject. The significant point is that the fine arts give students an environment and a stimulus conducive to the creative process, because in art, children can see more tangible and immediate results of their creative endeavors. With that stimulus, and with proper instruction and experience, students can eventually transfer their creative talents to bring about important results in the sometimes less tangible and less than immediate conceptual environments of, say, mathematics and physics.

Of course, bad practices exist in teaching the creative process. A common example is rewarding students for re-creating the obvious. A student, asked to draw a tree, is encouraged by the teacher to draw a tree that comes closest to reality for the teacher, and the student is rewarded if that result is obtained. This practice is the nemesis of the creative process. The result obtained relies on the teacher's perception of reality or a conventional perception of reality, neither of which may be relevant to the student's endeavor to explore and create. Einstein developed a very different perception of reality from his peers and the scientific conventions of his time, and it was his creative ability to slice through convention that brought about the most important scientific theory of this century. We must not shackle students' expressions of their perceptions of reality or inhibit their ability to break through convention. As was the case with Einstein, unconventionality in thinking was often the first sign of genius among great men and women—and remains so among today's students.

Another roadblock in arts education originates with fundamental issues about the fine arts themselves. For example, a common complaint concerning art is that it cannot be "understood"; it cannot be "explained." That complaint, as it relates to arts education, is less an intellectual argument than an attempt to dampen support

for art in education. There is absolutely no compelling reason why art must be understood or explained. The endeavor to understand art may be a goal toward which we strive but never achieve; but that does not diminish the importance of art in education. The complaint is astonishing when one compares science to art with respect to the issue of understanding. The great successes of science are based on very little, if any, concept of understanding; those successes are based on the accurate description of circumstances and events as they happened or happen—description, not understanding. Never does the place of science in education come into question because science is seldom understood!

Arts education is an exciting journey in the development of the creative process. There can be no argument regarding its importance, no debate on its relevance in education. The only matter at hand is figuring out how we can get the people responsible for programs in education and teachers in every subject to meet their responsibilities in arts education!

SANAE WILLOUGHBY *taught art at Samuel Sewall Greeley Elementary School in Winnetka, Illinois, and was a practicing artist.*

Myriad decisions are made by teachers in the course of a school day. When storytelling and videotaping are employed as a means for solving group problems, the interaction can create rich and memorable experiences for children.

A new beginning and a happy ending

Ernie Love

"IT WAS THE MOST HELPFUL THING that anyone could have ever done."

Tim, age nine, was new to the school. From the first day, he was having a difficult time making friends. By the middle of October, the whole class was coming down on him for every little thing he did or said. He was ostracized by everyone. Although Tim's actions at times invited and even exacerbated this situation, his classmates' callousness exceeded his provocations. It was truly a situation that was feeding on itself. I had intervened many times and in various ways during this six-week period. But my efforts served little purpose other than an immediate dousing of the flames; the coals still burned below.

My choice at this point was to intervene more substantially. And the role that I chose for myself was that of facilitator, as opposed to judge or cop or "fixer." And the tool that I chose was storytelling.

Storytelling has become an integral part of both method and content in my fourth-grade classroom. A case in point is the story "All Summer in a Day" by Ray Bradbury (1980). I worked up a telling of this story because it served as a valid reflection of Tim's situation in my class, the mistreatment of one child by the group. I used storytelling as a tool, with the hope that it would help bring about change in the dynamic of the group.

Fortunately, Tim was always very communicative with me. So by October 18 of the school year (1993–94), I sat with Tim and his mom, and we discussed how we might help him. It was during this conversation, as Tim was describing how he felt and how his classmates were

acting, that "All Summer in a Day" popped into my mind. When Tim finished his descriptions, I asked, "Do you trust me to try something tomorrow? I can't promise you that it will work, but do you trust me to try?" Tim's response was unhesitatingly, "Yes!"

That night I prepared a telling of "All Summer in a Day." Briefly, Bradbury's story is set in the future on the planet Venus. The climatic conditions on Venus are such that the sun comes out only once every seven years, and only for one hour. The rest of the time, Venus is beset with torrential rain. Bradbury uses this setting to illustrate the rejection and persecution of a young girl (Margot, an out-of-place Earth child accustomed to daily sunlight) by her classmates. The group's insensitivity and heartlessness is demonstrated by their action of locking Margot in a closet just at the time when the rains cease. She is kept from the once-every-seven-years bliss of playing in the sun. The story ends with neither a happy ending nor resolution. Rather, Bradbury accentuates tension by ending at the point where the kids remember that Margot is still in the closet. "They walked over to the closet door slowly and stood by it. Behind the closet door was only silence. They unlocked the door, even more slowly, and let Margot out" (p. 536).

The scenario of "All Summer in a Day" provided a metaphor for our group problem, and it served as the focal point of discussion. Several class meetings (which provided time for kids to discuss personal issues) had already taken place by this time in the year. So it did not seem out of the ordinary to the kids when I called them over to our rug area and announced that I would like to begin our class meeting with a story. It was not out of the ordinary to have a video camera running as well. It was set up in a remote corner of the room so as not to infringe on the telling and the discussion that followed. But I informed the kids that the activity was being recorded so that we could watch it at a later date (which we did, more than once).

At the completion of the telling, the kids were silent (I was true to Bradbury's ending). I broke the silence by asking, "What do you think?" One child responded, "Unusual," but the general silence continued. I waited a bit and then asked, "What do you think about

the kids in this story? What was going on with them?" In general, their responses centered around the words *selfish*, *mean*, and *jealous*. One child inquired if that was the end of the story. My response was, "Yes. So what do you think Margot did after they let her out?" They expressed how Margot would be angry, including wanting to get revenge and wanting to prove that she had seen the sun many times when she had lived on Earth. At this point, the kids were coming to life, and I sensed that the most important issues of the story were clear to them. So I redirected the discussion with the following comments and question: "There's an important reason why I chose to tell this story today. In our class, there's been somebody we've been putting in the closet. Just as you have been aware of Margot being separated—maybe the kids were jealous, maybe the kids just didn't like her. There's somebody in this class we've been treating a bit like that, too. Do you know who that is?" Two hands popped up immediately. I called on one child, who responded, "Tim." I took the risk and said that I knew that more than two of them were thinking that it was Tim. There was agreement, so I continued. "We need to have a conversation, and I want to begin by reading a reflection that Tim wrote: 'I don't know hardly anyone, and the 24 kids I know don't like me. I wish I could fit in, but I can't. It's hopeless.'"

The twenty-minute discussion that followed the reading of Tim's reflection became the turning point for the children in their relationship with Tim as well as with each other. With my guidance, the kids were encouraged to speak their minds. One after another, kids shared anecdotes of things that Tim did that bothered them as well as of things that they observed others doing to Tim that weren't nice and that Tim didn't deserve. Two children offered apologies. Within a short time, empathy for Tim became the theme as kids shared personal stories of how hurt they were when they were teased about being a "fatso" or a "window-faced four-eyes" or how they were picked on by an older sibling and "needed to take it out on someone at school." Soon they began sharing comments about how they could protect Tim on the playground when kids from another class were giving him a hard time.

The kids had clearly taken ownership of the situation. I had become a spectator. So I left the room, saying that they needed some time to themselves without me. I chose a leader to take my place, but the kids rejected my choice and insisted on Tim. They continued without me for six minutes.

At the completion of the session, the kids took a short recess. When they returned, I pointed out to them that the videotape of this class meeting was now hanging on the wall in a transparent plastic bag. I explained to them that the tape could serve as a symbol of the benefits of listening to one another, of having empathy, and of tolerance for discussing conflict among ourselves. I was able to refer to this tape throughout the year as a symbol of our ongoing work as a group as we forged our own society, our own culture in the classroom. I don't remember how or when, but at some point the videotape was given the title "Our [Class] Constitution in the Making."

When we reviewed the video later in the school year, we all acknowledged that that class meeting was "one of our best." I did not record what the specific reasons were. But for me, it was because the kids were empowered to effect change in their own lives. In this particular situation, storytelling played an essential role. The story was the guiding framework; I was not. Granted, I made a good choice, but the story provided the mediation for dealing with a very difficult situation.

And what about Tim? I was very interested in Tim's long-term memory of this event. I knew that his reaction at the time had been very positive. But I wondered if this story and class meeting had the same staying power for him as it did for me. Would he remember this storytelling situation as having been an effective way to help make his life at school more pleasant? Did Tim think that this was a good story to use? I invited Tim back for a visit on September 6, 1995, almost two years after the event. Tim was now in sixth grade. We met after school, and I recorded the event on audiotape (with Tim's permission). The interview, which lasted thirty-five minutes, was one of the high points of my teaching career. Tim, who had a detailed memory of the event, confirmed that "All Summer in a

Day" had been a good story to use to help him and the class confront the social problem that existed at the time. And in response to my question, "Do you think that the class meeting that we had on October 18, 1993, was helpful in making things change?" Tim responded (through a gentle laugh in his voice), "Yeah. It was the most helpful thing that anybody could have done."

And so it was that Ray Bradbury's tragic ending gave this storyteller a happy ending.

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As the teachers in the district become ethnographers of their own classrooms and students of their children's learning, they become attuned to the importance of events for children. This evokes a strong awareness of the significance of teachers' decision making and response.

Everything matters

Merle Scharmann

RECENTLY, I HAD THE PLEASURE of running into one of my undergraduate college professors. After the usual pleasantries, she asked rather directly, "Where are you teaching?" When I replied, "Winnetka," her face lit up with a broad smile of approval. "What's going on in Winnetka?" she inquired. "Oh," I told her, "we are in the process of revisiting our philosophy—we're reflecting." Her voice was strong with conviction as she said, "Reflecting on what? Winnetka seems to have gotten it all right. Everyone else is working hard to get to developmentally appropriate practice!"

I responded, "Yes, but everything around us is changing, and changing so rapidly that we do not have the luxury of being concerned only about development. Everything matters!"

It matters that the family dynamic has shifted, putting children into a different role within the family context.

It matters that children are spending increased time in alternative care—nannies, day-care homes, day-care centers.

It matters that parents, no longer having the luxury of time, require different and extended forms of communication and support from the school.

It matters that play has taken the form of structured classes, diminishing exploration and reducing opportunities for personal interaction.

It matters that knowledge about biological implications, multiple intelligences, and learning styles is serving to widen our

vision while national uniform standards serve to narrow our vision. . . .

My former professor went on her way, very happy to be retired. That experience continues to resonate within me as I consider my classroom practice.

Teaching, for me, is like the making of art. In the creation of art, everything matters. In the creation of the learning experience for our children, everything matters. Everything that we do with and for our young children is connected, integrated. As I begin to take apart my experience, I keep coming back to one absolutely essential thought, and that is that as we plan for children, we look at children—they are at the center of all that we do. Through careful questioning, listening, and observation, I can begin to know the mind and the hearts of the children that I teach. This ongoing conversation allows for the creation of a classroom context that is rich and powerful in its potential to socialize our children to a set of values that are democratic, profound, and long-lasting. This conversation becomes influenced by the messages that the children receive from the materials and structure of the classroom. Within the studiolike framework of an enticing and dramatic project, the children have experiences that allow for the creation of positive memories, memories that have the potential to be among the great sustaining and influencing features in the development of the adult's view of life.

Like an artist, I relish the unexpected, working to remain open to new explorations personally and professionally. While studying at the National Gallery of Art several summers ago, I wondered if gallery methodology used for the "reading" of artwork could be used with young children as they move from presymbolic to symbolic understanding of the world around them. The children's response to surveying illustration prior to forming an inference about meaning has been a window for me into their prereading skill. Exposure to the Reggio Emilia early childhood philosophy led me to explore the value of making concrete the memory of shared experience within our classroom, resulting in the creation of our Memory Wall. The children's response and use of their Memory

Wall led me to explore their understanding of time. Shared reading with my teaching associate led to questions about ways to allow our children to have conversations and question each other to achieve understanding of each other's intentions and purposes. This resulted in the creation of our Sharing Chair and Gallery talks. This critical discourse served to encourage elaborate use of language. Because all of the children's interpretations of the visual field are accepted as legitimate representations of their thinking, the children became genuinely interested in how others perceive the world.

Consider this from my junior kindergarten classroom. The children were returning from spring vacation. The tulip garden beneath our classroom window was in full bloom. The class was filled with excitement as the news of the garden filtered through the room. As we read a book together about the changes that were taking place outdoors, the children began to compare what they were seeing in the book with what they were seeing right outside our windows. As a result of that discussion, we decided to take clipboards, paper, and markers outdoors to sketch the flowers in our garden. These sketches were the content for our next discussion. While the children engaged in conversation, we could observe what they knew about the growth process of plants and where their questions lay in a very natural context. However, we could never have anticipated the response of one of our students to this study.

Joshua, who delighted in the use of color and material in a nonrepresentational manner, created a colorful drawing full of dancing lines with an organized story of the growth of a flower from a seed. Joshua eagerly came to the chair to discuss his piece with the class. My teaching associate and I held our breaths, wondering how the children would respond to this frantic explosion of color and line.

"What is the red?" asked one boy.

"It's the petals," said Joshua.

"And what is that blue?" asked another boy.

"It's the seed," responded Joshua.

A huge disagreement followed over the color of seeds. I asked the children how we could find out about the color of seeds. The children decided to collect seeds and compare them. At the same

time, our art teacher mounted an extraordinary exhibit representing flowers in large paintings, watercolor still lifes, sculpture, and relief. Seeing this exhibit, I immediately divided the class into two small groups to take a "gallery walk" through our own school hallways. As the first group walked through the exhibit, one of the boys shouted, "I have to get Josh! Look at all these colors! He's the expert!" Away he went in search of Joshua.

The two boys came back together, hand in hand. The children asked,"What do you see, Josh?" Joshua looked around and happily took over the discussion. So evident was his joy that he seemed to grow right before our eyes.

The next day, Joshua attempted to create a copy of a large photo image of a flower. Disappointed with that work, he wandered over to the clay table and began to make a ball. In an artistic milieu, purpose often shifts in midcourse. It seemed as if the clay material was speaking to Joshua as he reached for one of the tools. Then, before my eyes, the clay became a medium that he could use to convey his thinking. He slowly began to add sticks all around. When complete, he held that sculpture proudly in front of himself with both hands, as he said to himself, "I built a flower. Now I will write a flower." Quietly and purposefully, he set his sculpture down at the Print Center and wrote his first flower. And now, because perception is fundamental to cognition, Joshua began to see all of the flowers within our context. With that flower, he was beginning his transition to reading and writing with the creation of a long list of flower drawings, books about the growing process, and sculptures.

The joy that Joshua found in his discovery was shared via his work with his classmates. The sharing created a dialogue. The dialogue allowed us to come to know and appreciate one another. Knowing one another created regard, connection, and empathy. This, as John Dewey would have said, in turn created a community of learners that feeds back to the individual, keeping the process dynamic and recursive. The journey itself became our reward because *everything matters.*

MERLE SCHARMANN *is a junior and senior kindergarten teacher at Samuel Sewall Greeley Elementary School in Winnetka, Illinois.*

The computer has intruded into our educational framework in a very short time. Like an uninvited guest for some of us, the computer has not only come to stay but has also brought significant change.

Technology challenge

Robert Golden

ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT challenges facing teachers today in education is the integration of technology into meaningful activities for children. We are surrounded by a myriad of technological advances in school and in our daily lives. Today, I cannot think of any endeavor or human pursuit that is not directly affected by the computer in some way. Information is proliferating at a geometric rate. This is the world in which our children live, and a world that we must grasp in order to propel a child's understanding of it. By using the computer in the classroom, we are helping children construct knowledge with an instrument essential to the world they will soon inherit.

I tend to focus on the computer rather than the other technological advances because of its interactive quality, its connectivity, and its ability to control nearly all other forms of technology. Video, audio, laser disk, CD-ROM, telecommunications—all act as peripherals that can be creatively manipulated by the computer. For this reason, I see the computer as the ultimate informational tool; its very versatility places it in a class by itself. Despite the numerous irritations of memory errors, printer problems, and a growing burden of information overload, we must continue to strive for the inclusion of the computer in our educational practices. Computers and peripheral technologies offer remarkable promise for facilitating the implementation of the learning goals we set for children.

In Winnetka, we are poised at an important step in our ability to bring computer technology to bear on our educational practices. The modem lines are being connected as I write, linking children with

the global community and a surfeit of information, some valuable, some not. This accessibility, coupled with the quantum leaps in hardware and instructional software over the past few years, will challenge us to restructure our practices and build new configurations of instructional experiences for children. In Winnetka, we have not always had access to the optimum equipment, although I feel we have always been on the cutting edge of instruction.

Our collective knowledge of multiple intelligences, learning styles, cognition, and social and emotional development places us in a unique position to use computers in an effective way to bring about meaningful educational opportunities for children. Deliberate efforts to integrate technology into our instructional practices for children and to share those results with each other are essential in our journey as a community of learners. The computer has its greatest potential for a positive impact on educational reform when used by professionals who understand how children learn.

Back in 1983, Howard Gardner saw the potential for the computer in advancing intellect. "It is also possible, however, that extensions of the computer, including robots, might eventually be developed which would facilitate learning and mastery in the full gamut of intellectual domains" (p. 391). Teachers throughout the district are currently developing learning activities that make Gardner seem prophetic. Activities designed with technological components are structured to stretch a student's intelligence. These activities have helped children progress from one level of achievement to another, strengthening their aptitude in one or more of the domains of intelligence postulated by Gardner. The creativity of teachers in blending software with hands-on experiences to enrich student explorations have fostered our students' growth in all of the intelligences. The use of musical instrument digital interface (MIDI) in music has helped students of music become composers. Word processing has facilitated students' ascent to higher levels of reading and writing. Logo, technical education resource centers, and simulation CDs have fostered transitions within the logical-mathematical intelligence. Drawing programs, geometric design, animation, Claris slide shows, and Hyperstudio have all addressed

visual-spatial intelligence. The examples go on and on. As we continue to examine our practice in providing experiences for children in an array of intelligences, the computer will be a significant partner. When we document and share these efforts in education, we will begin to establish effective patterns of instruction that will increase our success in the curriculum design of individualized instruction.

I think it is important to think in terms of the computer not only as a device capable of empowering children to expand their capabilities in various intelligences but also as a vehicle for reaching students through a variety of learning styles. We have all witnessed students overcome deficits in perceptual skills with the aid of the computer. Simulations are very useful in providing images and additional informational cues for children. The new wealth of multimedia software, computer-assisted instruction, and word and data processing activities are all remarkable resources for children. The computer assists children by providing for individual differences in a variety of ways. Teachers who document the effective uses of the computer in improving a student's level of understanding will be providing valuable information.

Incorporating the computer into the educational experience for children is an essential element in bringing the real world into the classroom. Telecommunications in the classroom offers incredible possibilities. We are now a click away from people around the world. Countries, cultures, scientists, authors—the list of resources is extraordinary. Exchanging e-mail with people around the world has incredible potential for children and ourselves as learners. Telecommunications will allow us to broaden our perspectives through instantaneous contact with distant cultures. Deciphering the most productive ways to use the vast information available is a daunting task when approached alone. Sharing our experiences, our discoveries, useful Web sites, and the results of integrated projects will help us approach and use the formidable expanse of information on the Internet.

The interaction of the computer and a child's cognition will be a fascinating facet of our knowledge of teaching and learning. "The invention of the computer has provided a powerful if ever-

changing model of cognition and an invaluable tool in simulation, data analysis, and conceptualization of the human mind" (Gardner, 1991, p. 41). We must learn together through observation of children and their interaction with computers. The development of hypermedia and HyperCard stacks has changed the nature of presenting and receiving information. No longer is it a typically linear sequential activity; informational links are based on the designer's logical or intuitive connections. Allowing users to interact in a variety of ways, HyperCard stacks allow thoughts to be placed in a nonlinear fashion, linked by the creator's or user's unique sorting and connection of ideas. It is a web framework, rather than an outline format, for organizing thoughts.

What are the ramifications of this shift in the delivery and organizing of information? There is a three-dimensional quality to the experience of the computer software. Since two-dimensional logic is not always effective in a three-dimensional environment, we must rethink our lines of deductive reasoning. How we provide examples of metacognitive strategies for students will change with the multimedia environment of the computer. Many of the logical problem-solving strategies we employed in the past have changed with the nature of hypermedia materials.

Each computer programmer builds new constraints and opportunities for limiting or advancing thought. Each creates the rules of logic that should be employed for success in a given activity. We need to look carefully at software and question the nature of the content. Does it build or diminish student skills or thinking? Does it stimulate or inhibit creativity? We as educators are most capable of assessing the implications of this change in relation to learning and educational practice.

Now is the time for teachers to blend these efforts into a dynamic curriculum for children beyond Winnetka. We are traveling on the same path with many others. Let us help mark the trail of educational reform for ourselves, the children, and others in the profession. As we refine our pedagogical framework to align our practices with current research in multiple intelligences, learning styles, and cognitive development, we must expand our knowledge base and

share our results so others can follow. Teachers and students should also use the computer to document and assess their progress. The capacity of the computer to store data and images makes it a wonderful vehicle for portfolios. The collaboration of teachers and students documenting and sharing growth will signal the arrival of a portfolio culture in our schools. "Probably the most important factor in building up a process-folio culture is the belief on the part of teachers and students that such an atmosphere is useful and generative. If students observe their own teachers involved in projects, reflecting on them, and keeping track of their progress, such a model constitutes the most important lesson of all" (Gardner, 1991, p. 241).

The computer has intruded into our educational framework in a very short time. Like an uninvited guest for some of us, the computer has not only come to stay but has brought about significant change. I believe that as professionals, we must embrace the computer as a tool and, even more, as a partner in education. Nowadays, saying that the computer is a tool is like saying that the violin is a stringed instrument. Both become far more in capable hands, so their nature is defined by their use.

I believe that teachers will be the musicians who orchestrate the computer into educational practice and the eventual educational reform. If we hear each other, we will develop a rhythm that will enhance the learning opportunities for ourselves, to the benefit of all children. Teachers have the knowledge and talent to empower children to navigate their way through the dissonance of our world. Playing the instruments of technology together will help our students achieve their potential and reach a sense of harmony with themselves and others. Our challenge is to let the music begin!

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Teachers are always exploring, making connections, and looking for patterns in both their personal and their professional lives. Often they find surprising and rich answers in unexpected places.

Answers from the rain forest

Marjorie Steiner

RETURNING FROM A TRIP to the Amazon rain forest, I wrote a letter to my family. "I have returned safely, never to be the same person again. What a wonderful trip. I do believe it is one of those life-changing experiences."

This past year has tested every thread in the fabric of my being. Anne, our nineteen-year-old daughter, is dead, and we must go on without her. I have spent a year searching, searching for answers to the many why questions that have flooded into my life. I was searching to understand why this accident happened to Anne, searching to understand God. My reading had opened my mind to new insights in defining the reality of our world. The possibilities were exciting. However, life continued to be heavy and confusing.

In February, the invitation to travel to the rain forest in Peru came from the Chicago Botanic Garden's science director. The botanic garden was sponsoring a trip for teachers and had chosen the Children's Environmental Trust to direct the journey.

Emotions began to overwhelm me once again. My sister Terry, along with her husband and another couple, had started the nonprofit educational organization called Children's Environmental Trust (CET). CET had been taking junior high students to the rain forest since 1992, providing workshops to study the ecosystem and the culture of its people. Their trips had been recorded in *Ranger Rick* and *World* magazine articles. The instructors are experts in their field, volunteering their time out of their sense of urgency for the preservation of the world's rain forests.

This trip would connect my professional and personal lives. As a teacher of young children, I saw this as an adventure that would enrich my teaching. As a grieving mother, it was an opportunity to have my sister help me bring some resolution to the loss of my daughter. Anne had been studying science, psychology, and animal behavior in college. She had planned to go to the rain forest with her aunt, as a college CET chaperone, but did not live to realize this dream. In her place, Terry and I set out for the rain forest together. The insights I gained during this trip were profound.

We flew to Iquitos, Peru, arriving at night. As we neared the airport, all was dark until the final approach. Forest surrounded us. No familiar sprawling city lights. The shop doors were closed, the streets full of motorcycle taxis and buses. At the hotel, we were greeted by street boys selling jewelry, eight or ten of them so close you could hardly move. In the morning, the boys followed us like a parade as we boarded motorboats for the four-hour journey down the Amazon River to Yacumama Lodge, one hundred miles away. As I watched the land go by along the shores, the image of the European explorers traveling the rivers of America came to mind. We saw forest, occasional Indian villages on the banks, and fishermen or families paddling in their log dugout canoes. I was amazed at how untouched by modern civilization these people are.

The days were very full, often starting before sunrise and ending around 10:00 or 11:00 P.M. The tropical sun rises at 6:00 A.M., and darkness arrives about 6:00 P.M. It is hot and humid in the day, the same at night. Each day, we set out hiking in "full jungle attire." That meant rain gear, long pants, boots, long-sleeved shirt, hat, water bottle, bug spray, and sunscreen. The addition of a camera, binoculars, journal, and pen made us feel like spacemen. We soon adapted and found the forest to be spectacular in its beauty and diversity.

Planned workshops gave us varied experiences. Lino was our native guide. He is studying to be a shaman for his village, hoping to follow in his grandfather's footsteps. His knowledge of the plants' uses and the traditions of his people is rich. His humor and warmth reflected the nature of the Ribereno people. Flashlights and the bright moon cast shadows like doilies on the path at night.

Poison dart frogs, huge spiders, bats, and long hanging parrots' nests kept us entertained. Lino was very adept at catching these creatures so that we could get a closer look. Ants and termites of all kinds form the largest populations. The leaf-cutter ants climb all the way to the top to get the leaves richest in nutrients, then down to their nests with their large leaf loads on their backs. So many traveled in a row, they made visible paths through the forest. Their nests were huge, housing a population of millions. When the floods come in January, these nutrient-rich nests spread out, providing much needed soil for the plants. One morning, we climbed a tower built next to a 115-foot kapok tree to observe the canopy of trees and vegetation at sunrise. Hot steam was rolling upward as the colors of the sun started another day and the cycle of sun, evaporation, and rain began again.

One of the principles that our CET instructors taught is "rare is common, and common is rare." That means that the number and variety of species that you encounter is huge. However, you might not see another of that same kind for a mile. In a hectare of land, there would be about three hundred species of trees, compared to seven in the Midwest. This is true of the animal population as well, causing the plants and animals to specialize for survival. The light, temperature, and water supply remains consistent over the year. Growth and decomposition are therefore quick and constantly recycling. The soil is thin, just an inch deep, supported by hard clay. The sun is scarce on the forest floor. All of these factors contribute to "mutualism," species of plants and animals working together to get enough food and light. Growth is more diverse vertically than horizontally, so nutrients must also be available vertically. Conservation of energy becomes important, saving energy to get up to the precious light source that the sun provides. This trip confirmed my interest in the natural diversity of the planet and the way in which species support one another to survive.

Opportunities were provided to help us understand not only the ecosystem but also the culture and its people. The houses of the Ribereno people are platforms on stilts, with tall, woven palm roofs. Many have no walls. The children of the village far outnumber the

adults. The life span of the people is about fifty years. Almost everything they need is hunted, gathered from the forest, or grown in the village. The river is their source of water. Once again, I felt as if I were witnessing a level of village life similar to the North American native populations when the Pilgrims arrived. Their lives are basic, connected to the land and the rhythm of the seasons. They do not pollute or create garbage. Questions arose in my mind. How will the future affect these people? What will be preserved from their culture because it is wise, and what will be changed as they meet modern culture? Will *we* be able to learn from these simple people, this connected culture, this undisturbed piece of nature?

I had already learned from the rain forest and its people. Midweek, I had an "aha" experience, a glimpse from nature that had brought insight into my life, my classroom, my loss. While I was telling a new friend about our study of the preschool in Reggio Emilia, Italy, a profound comparison had emerged between how life in the world works and how the rain forest operates. It came in thinking about the light gap, the name for an area of the forest where a tree has fallen, thus letting in the precious and scarce light. New species come into the area, seeds opened by the strength of the light. They have been waiting for the right conditions for hundreds of years. The rain forests would not regenerate without these light gaps. All growth occurs because living things need energy that comes from the sun. They find a way to get to this light, or they do not survive.

I believe that the laws that govern people and how they interact are just as scientific as those of nature. The people in the town of Reggio Emilia grew because of a "light gap" in their lives caused by the destruction of their town during World War II. Out of their pain and loss, the people came together to rebuild, knowing that the children were their greatest resource and that both men and women were going to have to work if the town was to be rebuilt. A tank and a truck were recycled into resources that built a school. From a renewed community came a significant change in the way they visualize the education of children. Light plays an important role. They talk about light, they build their buildings to let the light in, and the

children play with reflected light. In the forest, light is the source of growth. The people of Reggio Emilia honor the individuality and interests of each child in concrete ways. They value multiple perspectives. They begin with the child's perspective and expand the child's thinking and knowledge. Parent, teacher, and child are cocreators. All of this richness has come out of destruction!

Anne's death created a light gap in my life. The loss has been and will continue to be very painful, but it has produced new growth and new understanding and increased light. I am a different person teaching children.

In the rain forest, there are many philodendron plants. They start from the germination of a seed on the forest floor. The seedling must grow toward a tree, attaching itself in order to have a framework on which it can grow toward the light. There is only so much energy stored in the seed, so it conserves energy by seeking darkness, first on the floor, then on the shaded side of the tree trunk. It grows into a vine with small leaves. Tightly it hugs the trunk of the tree, wasting little energy. When the vine reaches a certain height, it senses the sun's light and opens its beautiful leaves. Without its vertical movement to the light, it would die in the darkness.

I have learned that we must all reach for our own light source. For me, the inner voice of God is that light source. Through the darkness, I am moving to the light and "opening up" into the person I am meant to be. Scientists have told us that no matter is ever created or destroyed; it only changes form. We can count on these natural laws. I believe that all people are a part of this process, as are the plants and animals in the rain forest. We do not understand all of its meaning, but we can choose to stay in the horizontal growth plane, using little energy and absorbing less light. Or we can grow vertically, toward the light, developing new ways of understanding, gaining more energy, and experiencing more light.

In the forest, nutrients are garnered at all levels. The plants and animals are specially adapted to help each other gather the nutrients they need for growth toward the canopy, where the light is abundant. We too can provide nutrients for each other. People are

as intricately connected in mutualism as the leaf-cutter ants or fig wasps are in the perpetuation of the rain forest. At each level of our growth, someone is there to help us get the nutrients we need for further growth. Sometimes we recognize the nutrients and feel the energy, and sometimes we don't. Often we don't understand or we misunderstand, but the laws of nature provide all we need in order to grow.

My load is lighter; my new understanding brings joy back into my life. I returned to my classroom this fall with new eyes that see the evidence of what I had learned in the rain forest and in the death of my daughter Anne. Each child is unique, to be valued and to be nurtured. Each is a seed, called to "open up" into the person each is meant to be. Often children, like us, experience darkness, but they are ever called to the light. Experiences in nature can act as a model and a guide. The children are ready to open and begin to grow if the conditions are right. Within each is the potential for the solution to one of our world's challenges, just as in the rain forest each new seed that grows may be a solution to one of the world's diseases. Nature is an open classroom, ready to show us the way if we will but listen and understand. The importance of providing children with opportunities to observe, to love, and to see the beauty and order of nature is more profound than ever. I will grant the children in my care all the time they need to watch a bee fly from flower to flower gathering nectar and spreading the pollen, evidence of the mutualism of the plant and animal kingdoms. Nature teaches us about life, which then teaches us what to teach.

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Subject matter that takes into consideration the child's interests should be interrelated through integrated units of study. When thoughtfully developed, integrated curriculum lends meaning and enhances learning.

An essay on integrated curriculum

Andrea Saiet

THERE IS PROBABLY NO BETTER example of a well-integrated curriculum rich in experiential learning than the full and varied third-grade year in Winnetka. It has worked so well for so many years because it explores *pioneers* as a single broad theme throughout the year. It endures because by integrating literature, science, art, math, music, and drama into a whole curricular fabric, fragmented learning is decreased and higher-order thinking and creativity are unleashed. Through active "doing," the curriculum comes alive for children. And because humans remember what they do, especially when it is connected to real-life experiences, this learning endures.

It all begins with a study of the land itself—the vast, forbidding prairie with a fascinating diversity of plant and animal life, which became home to America's pioneers. Through films, pictures, posters, and field trips to prairies, the children learn about the scientific concepts of adaptation, survival, and interdependence. They learn to recognize many prairie plants and appreciate their adaptations to the harsh climate. They learn how natural fires cleared away the trees that would choke and destroy the prairie and how animals such as the prairie dog and bison helped aerate and fertilize the soil, making it some of the richest in the world. The third graders demonstrate what they have learned through drama, art, and writing. They paint murals that show the life of the prairie below and above the ground—compass plants and prairie dock measuring up to thirteen feet tall and roots extending the height of the children themselves underground. They act out various predator-prey relationships, thereby understanding, through their involvement in the

game, the complex web of life and how extinction of one plant or animal can spell disaster for another that depends on it for survival. Students then choose an animal for in-depth study and write their first research report. This extended research culminates in dioramas of each animal in its habitat, computer paintings, and original animal poetry, which is then published in a class collection.

The study of the Native American peoples, who lived for thousands of years on the prairie in harmony with the land, is the next unit of study. The children research the way the Native Americans lived; their food, clothing, and shelter; and how geography determines much of a people's way of life. We examine Indian artifacts and thoughtfully consider each attribute as we try to guess what they are made of, what they were used for, and what geographical region they must have come from. Students enact the daily life of the Native American people. They physically scrape the deer and bison hides and dramatize Native American legends and myths so that they can really come to understand and anticipate the coming conflict with the European view of man and nature. We conclude by reading about Squanto, whose true life story will reconnect the students to the lives of the Pilgrims.

In Winnetka, we believe that the curriculum should spiral throughout the grades, recapitulating important concepts at higher levels of understanding. The Native American study builds on curriculum experienced in each of the previous grades. In kindergarten, the children study the Plains Indians. Through drama, art, and play, the students acquire information and understanding as they enact the lives of the tribe members. In first grade, the Inuit culture is studied. The Eskimos' relationship to the land and the way that culture develops in response to family structure and climate spirals out of the previous year's study. In second grade, the children explore the night sky through the Native American myths and legends. Over the three years, the interrelationship of information, concepts, and skills around recurring and familiar themes helps students gain a sense of the connectedness of ideas.

Following the unit on Native Americans, the students turn to the European continent and the beginning of the Age of Exploration.

Columbus and his famous voyage are considered through multiple texts. The students write their own journals as if they were the famous navigator and develop a feel for the length of the voyage and the perils along the way. It offers a wonderful opportunity to imagine that dark and mysterious journey during a time when people still feared dragons lurking below the surface of the sea. The children also experience the joy of fulfilling one's dream and use information from the previous study to understand the differing perspectives of Columbus and the natives. The children pantomime having to communicate in this circumstance and experience the frustrating barriers inherent in differing cultural expectations and language. The concept of "hero" quite naturally arises, and emotions are charged as a lively classroom debate focuses on the question of whether Columbus was a hero. The students choose a position on the question, write out their arguments on paper, and support them with facts and examples from their reading.

Once the Spanish arrive in the New World, life on this continent is changed forever. Students develop a time line that reflects not only Columbus's voyage but also the Pilgrims'. Through drama, literature, and storytelling, they enact the Pilgrims' story from its beginning in England to the end of their first year in Plymouth. Students physically pack their trunks, wave good-bye to loved ones, and climb down into the hold of an imaginary *Mayflower.* In a dimly lit classroom, they nibble salted beef (which the students make themselves), pray, and play the few games allowed to the children. The children simulate the sway of the ship, feel seasick, and dream of land and a better life. Each child takes the part of various Pilgrims and the crew, learning the roles that were required of each of the participants. When land is sighted, arguments ensue, and the need for an agreement, or *compact*, so that all can survive is understood. Once on land, the "children" run, the "women" wash, and "men" go off exploring! When the search party announces, "This is the place," students realize with genuine sadness that this spot is where Squanto's village of Patuxet was before being wiped out by illness brought by the English explorers.

Students turn their investigations to the colonists and their many reasons for coming to the New World. Students map the thirteen colonies and create a jigsaw puzzle piece that depicts a colony, complete with flag, capital city, natural resources, and Native American tribes. Fitting all the pieces together is exciting and rewarding. We read about and compare life in the northern, middle, and southern colonies; noting through pictures the stark contrast between life in Jamestown and that in Williamsburg. The children make posters, write and prepare skits and pantomimes, and present oral reports to show and explain various aspects of colonial life.

Children learn that a person can be a pioneer in many walks of life and several times over in a lifetime. The characteristics that mark a person who is willing to explore the unknown and risk real and imagined danger can be found in the past as well as the present. When students understand this concept, they are ready to plan the remarkable journey westward. Students begin by arranging themselves into family groups of four or five and deciding on various family identities. Each child begins a journal that includes a family tree, illustrated description of life in the home colony, reasons for leaving, lists of articles packed and left behind, route, means of transportation, destination, and difficulties encountered along the way. Since there must be agreement within each family, this daily immersion in the 1800s involves numerous opportunities for discussion and cooperation as well as hands-on learning about history, geography, math, drama, art, literature, and science. The children don period costumes during a visit to an 1860s classroom. The contrast between the school life of children at that time and today provides another opportunity to identify with and relate to the past. In class, the children "break" flax and spin wool. Each child designs a sampler sewn with dyed wool from dried flowers and herbs harvested earlier in the year by the children just for this purpose. Students make predictions and learn about variables as they try through trial and error to create the natural colors used by the Native Americans and pioneers. They weave woolen rugs, craft wooden candleholders, and learn about the properties of solid, liquid, and gas in the process of hand-dipping candles. They investigate the properties of

a good wick, experimenting with different natural materials suggested by the children. After dipping tiny candles, but before lighting the wicks, there is much excited anticipation about which materials will work.

The children are now ready for what is no doubt the highlight of the third-grade year, a one-day visit by each child to the Pioneer Room. An authentically designed cabin, the Pioneer Room was built into the basement of Crow Island School. There, along with other members of the student's pioneer family, each child dons pioneer garments and participates in reading recipes, preparing and cooking a meal over an actual fireplace, making the fire, sawing the wood, fetching the water, washing the clothes, and "hunting" for and "gathering" food. The children each have their roles—Ma, Pa, child, and so on—and they try hard to stay in character throughout the day as they negotiate the day's chores in an equitable fashion. The students confront the need for real problem solving as they determine how to perform the necessary tasks; how to safely set a fire, light it, and keep it burning; how to follow a recipe, set a table, saw wood. Because no one may rest until the hard work of preparing the midday meal is completed, there is genuine rejoicing as we each share what we are grateful for before we may eat. Food never tasted so good! When it is time for schooling at the end of the day, the children get to read from the hornbooks they made earlier in the classroom and try writing with real quill and fountain pens. The hornbooks are a lasting memento of this day.

When we return to the classroom, each child completes his or her journal with an illustrated letter to someone left behind in the colonies, recounting the experiences in the cabin by the woods in the Illinois territory and completing the telling of the remainder of the journey west. As the children leave on the last day of school, they take their journals, their weaving, their samplers, and their memories with them.

It is no surprise to us that when alumni are asked about their fondest memories of attending school in Winnetka, they say without hesitation, "Third grade and the pioneers." We have always known that learning lasts when it has meaning, when our emotions are charged,

when we come to care about the people we read about, when we "do something" to learn and our doing has real purpose. We know that the more we involve our minds, hearts, and bodies in meaningful activities and the more connected those activities are to real-life experiences, the more enduring the memories and learning will be. When children experience their learning as connected rather than separated into discrete parts to be measured and tested, it remains a part of each child's foundation for future learning. Understanding how and why children learn is as important today as it was when Greeley opened its doors seventy-five years ago. That explains why, despite the educational upheaval all around us, we continue to value and pursue integrated curriculum as a means for helping children gain a sense of the connectedness of ideas and experiences in their lives.

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The Winnetka Teachers Institute started with a small budget and a big purpose. A strong and living symbol of the respect and regard for teachers that is part of the culture of the Winnetka Public Schools, WTI acknowledges the gifts of teachers and recognizes their many competencies. WTI reaffirms a teacher's sense of knowing by affirming that each teacher's particular interest has a broader audience.

Pioneers of our learning: Nineteen years of the Winnetka Teachers Institute

Winnetka Teachers

WE LEARN BEST THROUGH STORIES. They engage us and often serve as vehicles for communicating deeply held beliefs and values. The richness of teachers' experiences and the complexity of how we come to understand and continue to prepare for our chosen profession is often captured through stories.

Consideration of the role of the teacher as author of curriculum has a long tradition in the Winnetka Public Schools. The story that best captures that value tells how the Pioneer Room came to be. In the spring of 1937, teacher Francis Presler approached the superintendent of schools, Carleton W. Washburne, with the idea of building a life-sized pioneer cabin in the basement of the new school being built in the district. This request was in the form of a beautifully composed letter to Dr. Washburne. It will "greatly enhance the 3rd grade study of history and provide the children with a hands-on experience that will last a lifetime," she wrote. Washburne's reply was swift and strong. The cabin was built in Crow Island School, and after fifty-seven years, the Pioneer Room continues to provide memorable experiences for children about the travails of pioneer living. Miss Presler was right—and so was Dr. Washburne.

This vignette is one of the many Winnetka stories handed down over the years that defines the character of the Winnetka Public Schools. The simple notion of a teacher having a good idea and an administrator sensing the passion and large purpose expressed by that teacher is part of our culture. This story is emblematic of the respect and professional regard that is required for teachers to make a difference in the lives of children.

So how do we approach our own professional development with that regard for the individual and encouragement of thoughtfulness? Staff development is a topic that all districts grapple with in a variety of ways. More often than not, the decisions about what the staff requires and how to bridge the gap between curriculum and training are made centrally, uniformly, and in a standardized format. The efficiency of that model has long been attractive to most school districts—but not in Winnetka.

The often-told story of the beginning of the Winnetka Teachers Institute illustrates this strongly held value. Two decades ago, a group of teachers approached superintendent Donald Monroe and proposed an alternative to traditional staff development. Drawing on the Scarsdale Institute model, they proposed that a committee of teachers be formed that would organize a series of workshops and seminars on topics of interest to all faculty. Teachers would be asked to put forth an idea, and if even a small group of faculty would attend this workshop, plans would go forward.

The Winnetka Teachers Institute was born. A 1979 district memorandum describes the purpose of WTI:

> The Winnetka Teachers' Institute has been created out of Winnetka's commitment to child development and our continuous quest for professional growth and superior education. Using the special talents, expertise and leadership of the staff, the Institute will coordinate a quality program focused on professional needs and interests. The Institute will provide a forum in which we can exchange our ideals, expand our knowledge, develop curriculum, encourage educational research and writing, and keep abreast of the changing society as it affects education.

WTI started with a small budget and a big purpose. Since that time, more than one hundred courses have been taught by experts in a variety of fields. The WTI course teachers are our own Winnetka teachers, local university professors, and experts on a wide range of topics throughout the United States and other parts of the world.

As noted, WTI is a strong and living symbol of the respect and regard for teachers that is part of the culture of the Winnetka Public Schools. It acknowledges the gifts of teachers and recognizes their many competencies. It reaffirms a teacher's sense of knowing by affirming that his or her particular interest has a broader audience. Teachers who put forth ideas for a WTI course are recognized for their leadership in learning.

Any Winnetka teacher can submit a topic for consideration to the WTI board, made up of a faculty director, four faculty members, and one administrator. The proposed course may have direct and current curricular relevance or relate to wider areas of interest.

Of practical usefulness and stemming from regard for each other, our local fire department was asked to teach a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) course for our entire staff. Over the years, our firefighters have taught quite a few CPR sessions for our staff, which also serves to deepen our connection to other community services.

A few years ago, two of our kindergarten teachers attended the National Association for the Education of Young Children's conference in Washington. They attended a session about the Reggio Emilia preschools in Italy and were immediately struck by the strength of spirit and thoughtful disposition of these teachers. Upon returning to Winnetka, they immediately brought together a small group of teachers who organized the first WTI course on the Reggio Emilia approach to learning. What was unique about this particular course is that it engendered such interest for so many teachers that the conversations, dialogues, and coursework around the topic of the Reggio Emilia schools has continued for the past six years.

Each year, our schools host the Young Authors Conference. Students are asked to prepare a "ready for publication" original story. These stories are sent out to local writers a few weeks in advance of the conference for review. On the Young Authors Conference

date, small groups of students meet with these local writers, authors, and poets, who have had an opportunity to read their work carefully. The conversations about writing that fill the school on that afternoon are outstanding. This annual event led to another WTI course on writing and teaching poetry. Teachers observing one of the poets were so impressed by the passion and connection that we wanted her to teach us, too.

The Winnetka Teachers Institute is not only about enhancing our instructional skills; it has to do with the more personal dimensions of our lives. We are men and women at various stages of our careers and with a wide variety of interests. In addition to the professional affirmation it provides, WTI has managed to nurture the self-understanding that is required of all good teachers. Many of the course offerings illustrate that dimension. A few years back a course was offered on the topic "Our Aging Parents." Another course "Family History Across the Curriculum," was equally powerful in that it encouraged us to relate our own stories to our teaching.

In addition to the courses already mentioned, here is a partial list of other courses offered over the years, providing some sense of their variety and scope.

Chicago Architecture
Writing for Professional Publication
Fairy Tales: The Uses of Enchantment
Beginning Computer
Advanced Computer
Shape-Up Sessions
Native Americans in American Society
Interrelationship of Written Language, Spelling, and Read-Alouds
Learning Theory and Its Application in the Classroom
Brain Research Symposium
Rocks and Minerals
Music and Movement in Early Childhood
Dance and Movement Transaction
Math Their Way
Creative Drama in the Classroom

Teaching Adolescent Fiction
Therapy Through the Arts
Survey of Instructional Computer Materials
Science for K–2 Teachers
Stress Management
Teaching About Africa
Retirement Seminar
Quilting
Whole Language Workshop
Substance Abuse
Moral Development
Calligraphy
Teaching About Russia
Beginning Spanish
Math Standards
Seven Ways of Learning
Macintosh Computer
When It's Hard to Learn
Regions of North America
The Project Approach
A World of Difference
Science Software, K–3
What's on CD ROM 6–8
Writing for Different Purposes
Hyperscreen
File Maker Pro
Using a Powerbook
Nifty Newsletters
Teaching Great Poetry in Elementary School
Humanizing the Classroom
Pioneer Room Workshop
Drama and Storytelling
Internet Café
Macintosh Boot Camp
Journey of Archetypes in Literature
Math Manipulatives

As teachers in Winnetka, we believe strongly in promoting the professional vitality that is required for good teaching. We have always recognized our need to be lifelong learners, and over the years, we have sought to organize our professional lives with that in mind. We believe that by nurturing each other's creativity, supporting individualized learning, and providing an environment that acknowledges and rewards that learning, we model the basic dispositions we seek to instill in our students.

One teacher has noted that with WTI, "you never feel that there's a roadblock. . . . Anything is possible in staff development . . . and that's why we're here." The Winnetka Teachers Institute continues to be a strong symbol of the culture of the district. It embodies the energy, passions, and intellectual interests of the teachers in the Winnetka Public Schools.

These are challenging times for public school districts. State departments, governors, professors, and journalists are imposing standards, mandating standardized tests, and even providing answers for those of us who are in the schools. This chapter describes the process of mutual dialogue between staff and the community, who both hold strong beliefs about what is good for children.

7

Transformations and unanswered questions: A framework for direction

Rebecca van der Bogert

FOR A SUPERINTENDENT, entering a school culture is like being asked to write the middle chapter of a lengthy novel without having the opportunity to read the chapters before it—and of course, the future chapters are unknown. There is tremendous pressure to act, as anxious eyes are watching to see what you're going to write, the style with which you write, and whether you're going to write alone or collaboratively. Yet those earlier chapters are calling to be read.

I was anticipating pressure to act as I entered Winnetka similar to what I felt in my previous superintendency. I'd taken workshops with Barry Jentz and read his book *Entry* (1982), prepared entry plans, and outlined how I would get to know parents, staff, and the community. I considered myself experienced.

Entering Winnetka, however, was different. I was fortunate that unlike many districts, this one hadn't hired me to be its savior. The

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district enjoyed a strong culture, talented staff, a good reputation nationally, and community support. Through the interviewing process, it became clear that there were some transitional issues. Despite the firm foundation that a deep sense of tradition and community commitment gave the schools, the district was being challenged both from without by a society that was changing rapidly and locally by a vocal group of citizens who were attending to the media's cry for more accountability and greater focus on test scores. Within the district, the ongoing need to reflect on how best to meet the needs of students seemed to be magnified by the rate of change on the outside. This was coupled with a large turnover in staff due to an early retirement program. And now a new superintendent was being hired.

Ethnographer rather than administrator

I can remember those first summer days, sitting in my office and listening to parents and staff members who responded to my invitation to share their perspectives about the district. I heard suggestions about what might be improved, but always within the context of "please protect us from those who are challenging us. We're a special place, and we don't want to lose what we have." I saw tears, fear, joy, and passion as I was told stories of the past and hopes for the future. It became clear to me that one of my first tasks was to figure out the source of the passion and commitment as well as the fear.

The skills I had learned in my administrative courses proved to be relatively ineffectual, and I found myself digging back into the repertoire of skills I'd learned in my ethnography classes. I listened closely to parents, teachers, administrators, and community members as they described what was of value to them. I watched people at school board, administrative council, and faculty meetings and tried to make sense of how decisions were made, how people communicated with one another, and what connected people. I read vociferously anything I could find about the district—*Winnetka: A*

Community of Learners, literature that had been written about the district in the past, school board minutes—and I asked questions of people who had been in the district for years.

I listened intently to the kinds of things people chose to discuss. It was clear to me that there was a discrepancy between the perception some people had of the district and what I was sensing. I was hearing from a small but vocal group that Winnetka was resting on its laurels, and though it gave students a good solid education, staff were afraid to take a good look at themselves and see where we might grow.

As I met with staff, watched their conversations, and read their literature, I sensed a very different story. I found deeply embedded in the culture a commitment to research on practice, a pride in reflecting on practice, and the ability to question both practice and beliefs. It was clearly a district that incorporated theory while shaping theory through practice. I also found that Winnetka prided itself on using the democratic process, hearing all voices, accepting a diversity of opinions, and understanding the strength that comes from honoring differences and the growth that develops through the exploration of those differences.

In short, I learned that the staff were not afraid to let Winnetka be a "messy" place with a tolerance for ambiguity. They not only accepted the tensions generated by the need to balance opposing forces but transformed these forces into productive partners.

As a believer that perception is as strong as reality and that people can legitimately see the same thing in very different ways, I tried to understand the discrepancies. I listened carefully to the individuals who were challenging the schools and followed the public dialogue that went on among staff, parents, and these individuals. I picked up some subtleties that helped me begin to understand one of the keys to helping us through the transition.

There seemed to be two somewhat different dialogues going on, one in public and another in private. I heard strong public statements from those who were challenging the schools. The strengths of the district that they mentioned to me privately, however, were never acknowledged in public. Inadvertently, they were conveying

the impression that the district had serious problems and wouldn't admit it. But this was not the message I was receiving in my office.

Publicly, I watched parents and staff members react to protect the district. Yet in my office and at district meetings, they demonstrated a rich understanding of the need to reflect continually on what we do and the constant need to grow. When challenged publicly in a way that made them feel threatened, their passion about the district overrode everything else, and they became very protective, fearing that they would be losing things that were precious to them if they didn't mount a defense.

It appeared—and here I risk oversimplifying a complex situation—that the people who wanted acknowledgment that the schools should be looking at themselves felt unheard and were making overstatements about their dissatisfaction in a way that frightened others. Those who were actually in the process of looking at themselves were afraid to share any vulnerabilities publicly for fear that it would confirm that we were off track and would mean giving up things that were important to them. It was a stalemate.

Reflecting on transitions

The educator in me did a great deal of reflecting, reading, and thinking about the change process. As I read about the traditions in Winnetka, I came across many of the progressive principles about teaching and learning that I myself have held dear for many years. I found it useful to reflect on the connection of these principles to what we were experiencing as a district. The connection was clear; the implications and applications were not.

Transition means growth. Growth means learning. And there are some clear conditions under which people learn best. Not only is it important that a district create an environment in which these conditions exist for students, but it is of equal importance that it be cognizant of the importance of modeling the never-ending quest that all educators face: providing the most conducive environment in which growth flourishes. This is imperative for adults as well.

I began to build two models in my head. Though I realized they weren't discrete in real life, I found it useful to discriminate between the two for the purposes of thinking through what I was seeing. I labeled one model the "growth model" and the other the "change model."

We know the greatest growth comes when it is learner-centered, of real-life interest to the learner, and in keeping with the learner's style and talents. The focus of the growth model is to create an environment that is rich in questioning, safe enough for learners to explore and take risks, encouraging of learners to pursue their own interests, and individualized for each participant of the community.

A change model assumes a hierarchy. The people at the top know what needs to be done throughout the school district, carefully prescribe what changes are to take place, and expect compliance from all others, regardless of whether they're interested in the situation, need to make changes themselves, or find the changes relevant to what they are doing with their students. Clearly, the change model isn't conducive to the kind of learning and growth that we believe in here in Winnetka.

What I experienced when I arrived in the district was a tradition of the growth model. Teachers were encouraged to pursue their own interests, teacher autonomy regarding strategies and choice of materials was applauded, and growth took place through conversations, teacher-generated workshops, writing, and the sharing of ideas with colleagues at grade-level meetings. The community understood the importance of our staff being lifelong learners.

Due to the stalemate, some of the voices from the outside were being heard as though they were encouraging a change model. Some of those who were protective of the schools and committed to the growth model were afraid to acknowledge publicly the need for growth. What appeared to be an unwillingness to change was to some an unwillingness to be changed without having control over the direction. There was an incredible desire to grow.

What was called for was a forum in which all voices would be heard in a nonthreatening way. Those who cherished the schools

and were afraid of losing everything needed to feel safe enough to be able to join others in examining and reflecting on the schools. Those who weren't feeling heard needed to be listened to and helped to understand the process that others were using to reflect on growth.

Growth indeed

I was fortunate that the process that has been described throughout this volume emerged naturally from several directions and proved to be up to the challenge we were facing. Mary Ann Manley, our curriculum coordinator, consciously reached out to those who felt they weren't being heard and provided them with a forum for their thinking. And our researcher, Kathryn Simon, developed a process that ensured a hearing for every voice in a nonthreatening atmosphere.

The process was not easy. Parents needed to be reassured from time to time that they weren't going to lose what was so important to their children. We also had to work through accusations of skewed analysis of data. But on balance, people felt they were being heard. The results, which were compiled by an outside researcher, gave us a wealth of information about the community's perceptions of the schools and our philosophy. We were in a good place. The citizens of the town understood our philosophy, were generally supportive of the schools, and drew thoughtful attention to areas in which we might seek to grow. All of this assured parents and staff who were fearful of loss and provided us with an opportunity to show our process of reflection and growth publicly.

What we learned

My fourth year as superintendent in Winnetka is coming to a close. Not only do I understand the passion and commitment that I sensed in the parents and staff who sat in my office that first sum-

mer, but I feel it too. I also understand more clearly the source of their fears.

We learned a great deal from the survey. The majority of the community understands our philosophy and supports our beliefs about teaching and learning. In terms of implementation, we are addressing such areas as communication, individualizing for all children, and technology. These are of tremendous importance and a high priority for all of us. Perhaps of equal importance are the lessons we learned from one another throughout the process of revisiting our document, *Winnetka: A Community of Learners.*

The foundation on which the Winnetka Public Schools are built is firm. Carleton Washburne articulated and embedded beliefs in the district decades ago, and they have been carefully and intricately woven into the fabric of the culture. The foundation is greater than any one person and will sustain transitions and even transformations if we have faith in democracy, provide forums for voices to be heard, and make opportunities for people to pursue questions. The beliefs are founded in research, proven in practice, and confirmed by our students' successes.

Providing an open dialogue about those beliefs with the community and among ourselves as staff has deepened our commitment to them, clarified our passions, and created a sense of growing together as a community. It is clear that we had nothing to fear by exploration, bringing others into the dialogue, and showing our vulnerabilities. The assumption that challenge could mean the loss of a part of the foundation of our schools did not prove true; in fact, quite to the contrary. The past two years have been filled with rich conversation among colleagues, the generation of teacher research projects, and the energizing of the faculty at a summer institute.

Unanswered questions

Many unanswered questions remain. If we are clear in our beliefs, how does practice founded in these beliefs look in the classroom? If we're committed to democracy, what does that mean for the way

decisions are made in the district? What does it mean for student involvement in and out of the classroom? If we say we believe that learning takes place when it is learner-centered, how do we reconcile the emergent curriculum with districtwide guidelines? If we say we believe in childhood protected, what does that mean in 1998 that it didn't mean in 1984 when the document was first written?

These, of course, are ongoing questions, and the quest is a challenge that keeps us forever seeking and learning about how to grow as educators. The challenge, however, is even greater than seeking answers to these questions.

The challenge is possessing the spirit and courage it takes to do this as a district. Will we always be brave enough to ask ourselves how our practice might change as the world beyond us does? Will we always have the strength to show our vulnerabilities, knowing that we are grounded enough to do so? Will we always have enough faith in our beliefs to widen the dialogue to include those who challenge our practice and our beliefs?

Perhaps our greatest challenge as a district is to provide an environment in which everyone is engaged in such dialogue and reflection on practice, energized to grow without feeling the need to protect. How can we as a district provide an environment in which all individuals feel that they have a say in their own professional lives, are living by their beliefs, and are challenged to stretch their thinking through questioning?

My second year here, a very wise person told me, "You know, Winnetka wants progress without change." I have thought of that statement often. And I have figured out why it resonates. If we define *change* as something out of our control, of course we don't want change. What we all want is *growth*.

Reference

Jentz, B. *Entry*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982.

REBECCA (BECKY) VAN DER BOGERT *is superintendent of the Winnetka Public Schools in Winnetka, Illinois.*

Appendix A: *Winnetka: A Community of Learners*

ANY ORGANIZATION that is dedicated to maintaining its vitality must periodically undergo a fundamental reevaluation of its mission and its programs. The Winnetka Public Schools chose the 1983–84 school year to initiate such a reevaluation. Twenty-five years have passed since the district comprehensively examined the full range of its programs. In the intervening years, regular consideration has been given to each of the separate curricular areas, and frequent adjustments have been made. We have not, however, during that period evaluated our curriculum as a whole.

During this twenty-five year period dramatic changes have occurred in the world and will continue to occur at a rapid rate. The explosion of knowledge, the advancement of technology, basic social changes, and alterations in the structure of the family cause us to raise the question of whether or not our programs and methods are suited to current conditions and future requirements. The needs of the system and the needs of the children seem ripe for a review.

In undergoing such a review, it is important that we be guided by the uncompromising commitment of the Winnetka Public Schools to a consideration of the child as a whole person and to the maximum development of the essential skills. This commitment has not and will not change. Our primary purpose has been and will be the development in each child of the following:

- The ability to read well and with appropriate pace and comprehension
- The ability to express oneself effectively in speech and writing

- The ability to perform with precision the fundamental mathematical processes
- Mastery of the scientific process of thought
- The self-esteem needed to act with confidence and self-reliance

Our commitment to teaching the whole child and our commitment to the mastery of the essential skills has met with success. The scores of our students on standardized tests consistently place us among a handful of districts nationally that perform so well. Our students consistently outperform other students in demographically similar communities. Dedication to the whole child is evidenced by programs and special services that develop a wide range of interests and that are responsive to a range of individual needs.

Any educational system, however, that does not search for greater insight into how children learn, or does not seek a better understanding of the needs of our children now and as adults will not remain a superior system. Our commitment to this goal is being renewed and reemphasized.

During the 1983–84 school year, the Board of Education and a representative group of faculty members established the need for such a review, studied the future and its implications for the present, developed a plan for evaluating our K–8 program, and prepared the faculty. In the 1984–85 school year a Curriculum Task Force has further examined the future, has studied changes in childhood, and has given new consideration to the ways that children learn. As a result, we concluded that changes have occurred in families and in society that have seriously impacted childhood. Consequently, a set of guiding principles has been developed to assist the district in identifying areas where change is needed to positively affect the social and emotional growth of children and to better prepare them for effective participation in a future of rapid change. Additionally, the Task Force looked at recent knowledge related to learning and teaching and is examining ways to organize school and instruction in a manner that is most productive for student learning.

The document that follows resulted from the work of the Curriculum Task Force and establishes a set of principles that will guide us in reevaluating our curriculum.

A changing world: Focus on the future

During past centuries, succeeding generations could look at the world of their parents and create a reasonable image of the world they would inherit. The ability to envision the future has diminished with the increased pace of technological discovery and the accompanying explosion of knowledge. These accelerating changes affect not only the physical world, but also family and social structures.

Educators and parents currently find themselves preparing students for a world that will not only be continually and rapidly changing, but that can also bring feelings of frustration and even fear. The search for ways to influence the future by preparing our children to be effective citizens of the world can change that frustration to excitement and that fear to hope.

Most thoughtful scholars of the future come to several common conclusions regarding our world:

1. Global interdependence will be a reality with the ramifications of economic, environmental and political decisions being felt far from their source.
2. Technological advances will continue to accelerate and affect all areas of our lives.
3. Information and knowledge will accumulate at an explosive rate.
4. Alterations in social structures, career options and economic conditions will force people to adjust to changes more often than in past generations.
5. The rapid growth in world population caused by the increasing birth rate, medical advancements and the lengthening life

span will produce changes both in the quality and the value of life.

Meeting our students' needs

These circumstances make it necessary for a community and its schools to make thoughtful decisions regarding the world they want to build. The children of today will shape the world of the twenty-first century. Although a continued strong program for teaching the essential skills of reading, writing, mathematics and scientific evaluation is imperative, other experiences must also be provided.

Our studies have led us to believe that a school must also be a place where cooperation, compassion, and responsibility are taught and exercised, where self-direction and problem solving are consistently fostered and self-esteem is nurtured. These experiences enable young people to develop confidence in their own skills and abilities as well as a concern for others.

Our students will need that self-confidence, the competence in academic areas, an appreciation of the arts, and the human interaction skills to be effective participants in the world of the twenty-first century. Our world will depend upon adults who can responsibly:

- Read with comprehension
- Demonstrate quantitative reasoning
- Access and evaluate information
- Communicate ideas effectively and understand fully and precisely what others are saying
- Understand and respect the diversity and commonality among people
- Think reflectively and creatively
- Make rational decisions, solve problems and value excellence
- Understand and interact with the environment
- Create stability through developing and maintaining enduring relationships
- Comprehend the effect that each person can have on other individuals, on the community, and on the world

Guiding principles

The current Winnetka Public Schools program has many strengths. Thoughtful instructional practices develop strong academic skills while also helping children grow socially, emotionally and physically. However, we feel the curriculum should be strengthened by including the following principles which form the backbone for our curricular plans.

I. Childhood protected

The Winnetka Public Schools should provide opportunities for play and experiential learning that are necessary for development and that must not be replaced by more "grown-up" activities and television.

It is too easy for the adult world to impose itself on children; we need to be protective of childhood and the experiences and opportunities for growth children need during this time.

With increasing media availability and the changes in social structures, even the most diligent parents find it increasingly difficult to protect their children from the adult world. Television and the advertising industry bombard our young people with a world that although they are not ready to understand, they emulate and fear. It is not unusual for parents and institutions to react to these seemingly precocious children by treating them as though they were the age they are "acting."

In response to this, we believe in the importance of play and experiential learning throughout a child's education. Self-directed activity and first-hand experience are a child's best means of learning. In play, children practice the concrete processes that they will eventually internalize as abstract thought. Play is a medium through which children can formulate and test their own values. Play is the real work of childhood.

II. Global understanding

The Winnetka Public Schools program needs to provide students with experiences necessary to understand not only themselves, but their relationship to other people of the world.

In an interdependent world, the school curriculum must promote cooperation and the testing of each person's ideas against those of others. This requires examining the time spent in individualized instruction in contrast

to group learning. Children may need less time working alone and more opportunity for serious discussion, deliberation, debate, and cooperation. While individuality should be recognized and encouraged, it must be balanced by a sense of working together. In addition, we need to study the uses of competition to understand where it benefits learning and where it is detrimental.

The depletion of increasingly scarce natural resources will require our children to live in a highly interdependent, global community. The ability to set priorities and to seek resolutions in a way that benefits all of mankind will be crucial.

III. Community-school partnership

The village and the schools of Winnetka should join together in meaningful activities that help children acquire the skills necessary for active, responsible participation in society.

In this latter part of the twentieth century, and particularly in communities such as Winnetka, the contributions of young people are not considered necessary for the physical survival of families. In this setting, it is often difficult for children to see themselves as important members of their family, school, and village. Being an integral, needed member of a family and community is a first step toward a feeling of powerfulness, of being able to effect change in the world.

In many instances, the non-school learning of children and youth may be extremely valuable in helping them cope with and control their environment. Recognizing this, we need to help children understand the value of both the in-school and out-of-school learning. We can do this by using the community and the city as a teaching resource through which many forms of learning can take place.

IV. Consistent relationships

In order to develop interpersonal skills and to provide stability and consistency in these relationships, flexible arrangements should be made that give children opportunities over time for consistent relationships with other children and with adults important to the child.

With changing family roles and social structures, children now, more than ever, need opportunities for continuing relationships. Schools are still a

place where these long-term relationships can occur. It is then necessary for us to find ways to develop continuing relationships between students and between students and teachers. There are many different ways this could be arranged including multi-age classrooms, the opportunity for a teacher to stay with a class for more than one year, children of different ages working together, an advisor who continues for several years or intergenerational relationships.

A child learns to maintain enduring relationships through experience. The goal of developing continuing relationships should guide organizational structures.

V. Parent-school cooperation

Partnerships between parents and school should be encouraged and promoted through opportunities to share knowledge and experience. This should also include parents of infants and pre-schoolers.

With rising pressures on families and children, it becomes increasingly important for schools to better define their role in working with family needs.

Information and activities should be available for all parents including those of infants and pre-schoolers. Provisions should be made for parents and teachers to talk together. The earlier a parent becomes familiar with the school environment, the greater the opportunity for mutual understanding.

Changes in family and social structures, as well as the uncertainty of a future we don't understand, can make rearing children an awesome responsibility. By working together as parents and educators we can make a difference in the lives of our children.

VI. Student and teacher planning

All children should be active in their education and have opportunities to participate in the selection of appropriate curricular activities.

Learning takes place most effectively when children are challenged by genuine problems associated with their natural interest. Many skills can be integrated with interests and activities the children themselves choose. Children should be included in the choice of some topics selected for learning. Pupil-teacher planning is a valuable strategy. The act of choosing empowers children to respect their own insights and decisions and increase their motivation to learn.

VII. Understanding learning and thinking

Students should be helped to understand better how they learn and think.

Children need to be aware of the different processes and uses of learning. For example, a math problem is approached with different strategies than those used in creative writing. An awareness of the limitations of the various ways of thinking must be fostered and strategies for matching thinking styles to situations must be learned.

Teaching thinking skills is probably best accomplished as teachers reflect with students as to the best strategy for a particular task within the curriculum rather than isolating "thinking skills" into a separate course of study.

VIII. Integrated learning

Subject matter should be interrelated through integrated units of study to add meaning and thereby increase learning.

The importance of integrating the curriculum, teaching in context and focusing on the interrelatedness of disciplines decreases fragmented learning and increases higher order thinking and creativity. When developing curriculum, the focus must be on interrelating information, concepts and skills from different disciplines around a common theme. Children thereby gain a sense of the connectedness of ideas.

IX. Developmental learning

Learning should be made more efficient and effective by organizing and presenting instruction in a way that is compatible with the developmental stages of a child.

Winnetka teachers should continue to review skills and concepts to ensure they are taught and attained sequentially. Although teachers need not use the same materials, lessons and methods, the goals and skills necessary to accomplish the desired ends should be clearly delineated.

X. Understanding of technology

The Winnetka Public Schools should provide a balanced program of the sciences and the humanities to promote an understanding of technology and the relationship of technology and society.

An appreciation of and familiarity with technology depends on possessing a solid foundation of math and science. Evaluating the affects of technology on society also requires an understanding and appreciation of history, literature, the arts and all that makes us human.

The computer, as an example of technology, must be viewed as a tool for human use. We must provide students with experiences to develop confidence in their own abilities to evaluate and take advantage of technology, as well as direct its future application.

XI. Physical and emotional well-being

The Winnetka Public Schools should instill the attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary for the acquisition of physical and emotional well-being.

A changing world requires an internal strength and resilience to better control the stresses of uncertainty. The development of our own mind and body into a healthy, growing organism is a responsibility that belongs to each of us personally. Educated persons must understand the interrelationship of physical and mental health and the effects of external, environmental factors on the body and mind.

Children must be given the necessary information to aid the early development of good nutrition, exercise, and health habits that will promote a sound mind and body during adulthood. Physiology, nutrition, substance abuse, emotional development, health and physical education should be integrated to better present the interrelatedness of their impact on humans.

Future plans

During the 1985–86 school year, we will begin to reevaluate the specific components of our kindergarten through eighth grade curriculum. A separate committee of seven to nine faculty members will examine each of four major curricular areas. Faculty members serving on a committee will have a particular interest and strength in the subject area under consideration. In addition, committees will be formed to examine areas of related study such as music, art, physical education, computers, and junior high elective.

In reexamining each of the curricular areas, the committees will raise the following questions:

- Does it reflect current research and knowledge of content, methods, and materials?
- Are the skills and concepts presented sequentially and at developmentally appropriate stages?
- Does it adequately prepare our students for effective participation now and in the future?
- Does it conform to the guiding principles as stated in *Winnetka: A Community of Learners*?

Overseeing this activity will be a Curriculum Coordinator who will have the assistance of the Curriculum Task Force that was operating during the 1984–85 school year. In addition, the Citizens' Advisory Committee will continue to represent the community in monitoring reevaluation activity. Outside consultants will be employed to make sure that our activity reflects the best of current, professional thought.

We anticipate that during the 1985–86 school year we will complete the language arts and math reevaluation as well as most of the areas of related study. It is likely, however, that science and social studies will be completed in the 1986–87 school year. During the 1985–86 school year, we will create opportunities for community involvement and information.

The school years of 1986–87 and 1987–88 will see the implementation of new curriculum, considerable staff development activity, attempts to identify ways to integrate subject matter, and adjustments to new curriculum as a result of all this activity.

The major end products will be a completely updated K–8 curriculum, a faculty that has been actively engaged in a high level of professional reflection and practice, and a community that has been informed and involved.

Conclusion

Striving for excellence requires deep commitment over time. These recommendations are only a beginning, yet a beginning that takes seriously the needs of our children as citizens of a world of accelerated change.

Schools are in the human development business. As the school, community, and parents work and study together to find the best way to teach our children, we as adults model life-long learning.

While committing ourselves to common goals, we must also respect the differences among students and teachers. We must commit ourselves to diversifying teaching and learning practices to fit students and teachers.

A school system that sets specific goals must look seriously at evaluating the long-term effects of its program. This is another opportunity for educators to become students of their own work and to examine results over time in order to better understand teaching and learning.

The excellence of a school lies not in the recommendations it makes, but in the working of its internal processes to constantly improve and monitor its performance. Resources must be available to prepare faculty initially and continually to meet these goals. Because excellence is a state of becoming and not of being, we readily accept the charge of undertaking this important challenge.

Appendix B: Winnetka School District Survey

EVERYONE - Please fill out Q.1–27.
CURRENT & RECENT PARENTS OF ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN - Please fill out Q.1–40.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

1. Please "X" the appropriate grade levels or age grouping for each of your children. If you do not have any children, please "X" the no children option.

Pre-kindergarten	☐	4th and 5th grade	☐	18–25 years old	☐
Kindergarten	☐	6th-8th grade	☐	Over 25 years old	☐
1st-3rd grade	☐	9th-12th grade	☐	No Children (skip to Q.6)	☐

2. Are your children (Please "X" one box)
   Boys ☐ Girls ☐ Both boys and girls ☐
3. Please indicate which schools your K-8th grade child(ren) *currently* attend(s).
   Crow Island/Hubbard Woods/Greeley ☐ Washburne ☐
   Private/Parochial school ☐
4. Please indicate which, if any, of the following schools your child(ren) *have attended in the past five years.*
   Crow Island/Hubbard Woods/Greeley ☐ Washburne ☐

5. Please indicate which of the following schools any of your child(ren) *have ever attended.*
   Crow Island/Hubbard Woods/Greeley ☐ Washburne ☐
6. Did you or your spouse attend Winnetka's public elementary or middle schools?
   You: Yes ☐ No ☐ Spouse: Yes ☐ No ☐ No spouse ☐
7. How mny years have you lived in Winnetka?
   0–3 years ☐ 4–7 years ☐ 8–10 years ☐ 10–15 years ☐ Over 15 years ☐
8. Do you or your spouse work full or part-time outside of the home?
   You: Full-time ☐ Part-time ☐ No ☐ Spouse: Full-time ☐ Part-time ☐ No
9. Please "X" one to indicate if you are: ☐ Male ☐ Female
10. What is the highest educational level you and your spouse had the opportunity to complete?

	High School	Some College	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Program	Doctorate Program
You:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your Spouse:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

IMPORTANT SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

11. In your opinion, how important is it that Winnetka's elementary and middle schools teach each of the following? (For each item listed, "X" one box in column Q.11)
12. Recognizing that the schools cannot give equal emphasis to all subject areas, please "X" the 5 to 10 items on which you would like the schools to place the greatest emphasis. (Please "X" 5 to 10 boxes in column Q.12)

	Q.11 Importance					Q.12 Areas for Greatest Emphasis
	Essential	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	("X" 5 to 10 items)
Ability to read with comprehension	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How to find, evaluate & use information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A sense of wonder and curiosity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Problem solving skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conflict resolution skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to perform fundamental mathematical processes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to understand & apply mathematical concepts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Q.11 Importance					Q.12 Areas for Greatest Emphasis
	Essential	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	("X" 5 to 10 items)
Ability to think creatively and flexibly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowledge of the fundamentals of a healthy lifestyle	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to work independently	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to work in groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowledge/appreciation of the arts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hands-on experience with the arts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understanding history & its implications for the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowledge of geography	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Development of physical skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to communicate in a foreign language	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understanding commonalities and differences in people & cultures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Understanding & use of basic scientific methods & principles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to obtain and evaluate information via the computer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How to communicate via use of a computer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to communicate ideas in writing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to communicate ideas verbally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowledge of basic governmental structures/processes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowledge & understanding of environmental issues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leadership skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

13. Given that the parent has primary responsibility for many aspects of a child's development, ***how much responsibility, if any, should the school have or share for each of the following***? (For each item listed, "X" one box in column Q.13)
14. Recognizing that the schools cannot give equal emphasis to all areas, please "X" in column Q.14 the 5 to 10 aspects of development on this list to which the schools should give the greatest priority.

	Q.13 School's Responsibility Level					Q.14 Areas of Greatest Priority
	A Lot		Medium		None	("X" 5 to 10 items)
Emotional development and well being of child	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Physical development of child	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social development of child	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Child's development of healthful habits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Substance abuse education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Promoting awareness, understanding and respect for differences among people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Exposing students to life beyond Winnetka (e.g., Chicago's neighborhoods)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching responsibility for the environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing knowledge and appreciation of the arts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing knowledge and discussion of current events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encouraging community and civic participation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Developing self-esteem and self-confidence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Developing an optimistic outlook on life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Developing strong character (honesty, respect, caring, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Developing compassion and concern for others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching cooperation in working with others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching self-reliance and responsibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing support for specific need situations (e.g., new-comers, children dealing with separations/divorces)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing before- and after-school care for children	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing before- or after-school enrichment activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing a safe and constructive environment for adolescents to gather during after-school hours	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Educating parents regarding children's/teens' health issues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS

15. What level of confidence do you have that the Winnetka public schools will: ("X" one box for each item)

	Level of Confidence				
	High		Medium		Low
Provide an excellent elementary and middle school education for Winnetka's children	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Work with parents to meet the unique needs of their children	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following? ("X" one box for each item listed)

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	No Opinion/ Don't Know
The schools should support emotional and social development as well as academic and intellectual growth	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The schools should focus primarily on academic and intellectual growth	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students in Winnetka get a solid education in the basic subjects (e.g., math, reading, writing, science)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students should have the opportunity to learn at their own pace	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students should be expected to meet common standards for each grade level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Winnetka elementary and middle schools encourage students to achieve their best	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Respecting and protecting the childhood of our students is very important to their overall emotional development and well-being	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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An emphasis on cooperation better prepares children to deal with life "down the road"	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students and parents should give priority to completing school-related tasks over other extra-curricular activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students should develop a love of learning and be prepared to continue learning throughout their lives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schools should provide experiences which allow the student to feel confident about when and how to use computer technology	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Elementary and middle school students should have easy/ready access to computers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of computers should be incorporated into homework assignments whenever appropriate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Experience with the arts is essential to the full development of a student's capabilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The arts are an excellent tool to facilitate the learning of many subjects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. In my opinion, the ideal class size for elementary and middle schools would be . . . ("X" one box)
☐ 18 or fewer ☐ 19–21 ☐ 22–24 ☐ 25–28 ☐ 28–32

18. To what extent would you support the schools' use of the following in order to promote an understanding of cultural and ethnic commonalities and differences? ("X" one box for each item listed)

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No Opinion/ Don't Know
Classroom study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Real-life student involvement (e.g. involvement with Chicago city schools)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching foreign language with an emphasis on culture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Internet exchanges with students in other places	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Offering optional summer trips or exchanges	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hiring diversity in the teaching staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

19. For each grade grouping listed below, indicate whether you believe that competition at these grade levels would be:

	A Strong Positive Motivator	A Mild Positive Motivator	Has No Impact On Motivation	Is Mildly Demotivating	Is Strongly Demotivating
Grades K-3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 4–5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 6–8	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

INDICATORS OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

20. How valuable are each of the following in providing you with a good assessment of the school district's overall performance?

	Very Valuable	Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Not Very Valuable	No Opinion/ Don't Know
Standardized test scores	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community feedback via the Caucus survey	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School board reports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Administrator reports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teacher credentials	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Children's attitudes toward school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teacher and administrator morale	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In-school observation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff/administrator presentations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Performance of Winnetka's students at New Trier	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Assessments relative to the School Improvement Plan	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School Report Card	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The "feel" or culture of the school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Local newspaper reports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Very Valuable	Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Not Very Valuable	No Opinion/ Don't Know
Outside media reports (e.g., magazine articles, Chicago area papers, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School newsletters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Perceived amount of parent participation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
District displays of student work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

COMMUNICATION

21. How important is it to you to be informed on each of the following: ("X" one box for each item in column Q.21)
22. How well informed do you feel you currently are about each of the following? ("X" one box for each item in column Q.22)

	Q.21 Importance				Q.22 How Well Informed		
	Extremely Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Well Informed	Somewhat Informed	Not Very Well Informed
Winnetka's educational philosophies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching approaches employed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Curriculum content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grade level goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Current school district issues (e.g., facilities)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Major school initiatives (e.g., technology)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Specific classroom activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Specific student accomplishments (other than your own child's)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School district performance on standardized tests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

23. How open do you perceive the schools to be to each of the following? (For each item listed, "X" one box in column Q.23)
24. How open do you believe the schools *should* be to each of the following? (For each item listed, "X" one box in column Q.24)

	Q.23 Openness to Input			Q.24 How Open Should Be to Input		
	Very Open	Somewhat Open	Not Very Open	Very Open	Somewhat Open	Not Very Open
Parent input	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community input (non parent)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student input	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

25. To what extent are you in favor of the following? ("X" one box for each item)

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No Opinion/ Don't Know
Before and after-school enrichment activities at the middle school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Before and after-school enrichment activities at the elementary schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
An extended academic day at the middle school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Before and after-school care at the elementary schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Before and after-school care at the middle school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

26. Please list 2 or 3 of District 36's greatest strengths with respect to meeting students' needs.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

27. Please list 2 or 3 areas where you would like to see increased emphasis in our elementary and middle schools over the next few years.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Congratulations and Thank You!
You have just completed Part 1.

PARENTS

If you currently have children in Winnetka's elementary or middle schools,

OR

If you have had children in these schools any time in the past 5 years,

Please go on and complete the last 3 pages of the survey.

If you are not a current or recent parent of elementary or middle school children

STOP HERE

and return the survey in the postage-paid envelope provided.

FOR CURRENT AND RECENT PARENTS OF ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN

MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS

28. For each of the following student needs, please rate the performance of Winnetka's elementary and middle schools in meeting those needs for exceptional, mainstream or special needs students. ***Please base your answer only on your own experiences with your own children.***

    For each, write in the number that best describes your opinions:

5= Excellent	4= Very Good	3= Good	2= Fair	1= Poor	0= Don't Know/No Experience

	Exceptional	Mainstream	Special Needs
Providing materials at the right level	_____	_____	_____
Providing materials in the right amount	_____	_____	_____
Providing challenges appropriate to their ability	_____	_____	_____
Building self confidence & self esteem	_____	_____	_____
Communicating progress and needs to parents	_____	_____	_____

29. For each grade grouping listed, to what extent to do you think Winnetka's schools should increase or decrease the level of competition among students?

	Increase A Lot	Increase A Little	No Change	Decrease A Little	Decrease A Lot	Don't Know/ No Opinion
Grades K-3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 4–5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 6–8	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

30. For each grade grouping listed, to what extent to you think Winnetka's schools should increase or decrease the focus on cooperative efforts?

	Increase A Lot	Increase A Little	No Change	Decrease A Little	Decrease A Lot	Don't Know/ No Opinion
Grades K-3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 4–5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 6–8	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

31. To what extent do you believe that Winnetka's schools appropriately protect elementary and middle school children from the sometimes harsh realities of the world while also preparing them to deal with those realities?

	Tendency to Over-Protect	Appropriately Protect	Insufficient Protection	Don't Know/ No Opinion
Grades K-3 (lower grade elementary)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 4–5 (higher grade elementary)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 6–8 (middle school)	☐	☐	☐	☐

32. What is your opinion of the *amount of homework* given at various grade levels?

	Too Much	Just Right	Too Little	Don't Know/ No Opinion
Grades K-2	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 3–5	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 6–8	☐	☐	☐	☐

33. What is your opinion of the *value of the homework* assignments given at the various grade levels?

	Very Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Not Very Valuable	No Opinion/ Don't Know
Grades K-2	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 3–5	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades 6–8	☐	☐	☐	☐

34. Do your elementary and middle school age children have access to a computer at home for educational purposes (school assignments)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

35. How do you, or did you, perceive your elementary and middle school age children relative to others in their grade/class? (If you have more than one child, "X" all that apply.)

Exceptional ☐ Mainstream ☐ Special Needs ☐

36. Generally the Winnetka schools teach students of mixed abilities all in one class, while modifying use of the curriculum and teaching approaches to address individual needs. For each statement listed below, check one response to indicate to what extent you agree or disagree that each is an outcome or result of this teaching approach *as it has been implemented in Winnetka.* ("X" one box for each item listed)

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	No Opinion/ Don't Know
Provides a more stimulating environment than ability grouping	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provides valuable "real world" experience	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Curtails teachers' abilities to meet individual needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Can work well with the use of one-on-one aides for special needs students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaches flexibility/patience/ cooperation/caring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Results in frustration and boredom for *many*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Results in frustration and boredom for *a few*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Minimizes isolation and labeling among students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helps each child develop to his/her fullest potential	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creates disadvantage for students who are slower to develop	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

COMMUNICATING ABOUT STUDENT PROGRESS

37. How important is it to you to be informed about each of the following? (For each item listed, "X" one box in column Q.37)
38. How satisfied are you with the communication you receive on each of the following? (For each item listed, "X" one box in column Q.38)

	Q.37 Importance				Q.38 Satisfaction			
	Extremely Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Your child's development of basic skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your child's individual needs & goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your child's progress vs. his/her individual goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your child's progress relative to age/grade expectations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your child's progress relative to others in his/her class	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

39. Thinking about the various ways in which parents *are or could be* informed about a student's progress, how useful do you think each of the following are or could be in terms of providing insight about your child's development and progress? (For each item listed, "X" one box in column Q.39)
40. Now *consider only those with which you have had experience within the Winnetka elementary and middle schools.* As they are used in Winnetka, how satisfied are you with the insight provided from each of these? (For each item listed, "X" one box in column Q.40)

	Q.39 Usefulness				Q.40 Satisfaction			
	Extremely Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Very Useful	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Parent teacher conferences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Written teacher reports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Portfolios/portfolio nights	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reviewing examples of work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Review of in-class test performances	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Standardized test scores (e.g., IGAP, CAT)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grades	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Checklist of progress vs. specific curriculum objectives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parent observation of student at home or school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Q.39 Usefulness				Q.40 Satisfaction			
	Extremely Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Very Useful	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Conference with principal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discussion of performance vs. individual student's goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discussion of student's performance vs. grade level goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student's self assessments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Comparative measures that show how child is doing vs. others in class/grade	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for your participation. Please return in enclosed envelope.

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When the Winnetka Public School system reexamined its philosophy, questions were raised about the alignment between theory and practice. As teachers attempted to determine if they truly "walk the talk," they began to view their practice as dynamic and subject to a variety of personal and professional influences that create change over time. This sourcebook represents the thinking of professionals who are first and foremost teachers. Their thoughtful discussions demonstrate that the philosophy's validity rests on our ability to analyze what we are, discover how we came to be what we are, and imagine what we will become. By working along common lines and with a common spirit, teachers acknowledge that the reexamination of a philosophy can be tested only in action, and within this process, not only the form of teaching, but its meaning as well, will be altered.

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